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PRICE ONE SHILLING.

# BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN

*A Queer Story  
about Drinking*



LONDON: W. TWEEDIE, 337 STRAND



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# BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

A Queer Story about Drinking.

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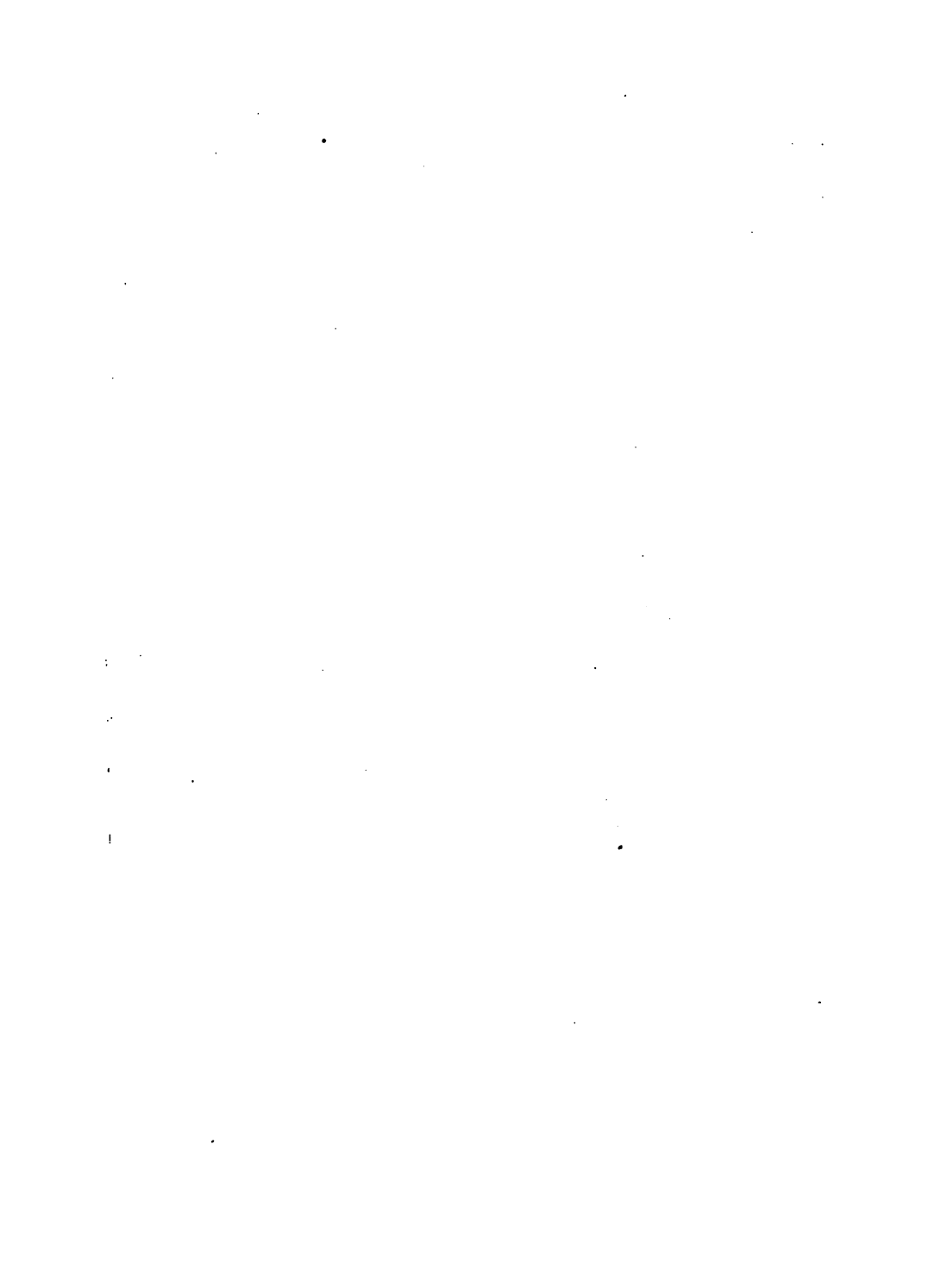
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# BEFORE AND BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

## *A Queer Story about Drinking.*

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### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCES A FEW CHARACTERS.

It was a sultry evening in July. So enervating that a poet would probably have represented the clouds as shedding languor from their darkening folds. Mr. Rowland Ray, of Prospect House, was reclining on a couch, with a much more direct view to ease than to elegance. His nephew Arnold was rocking himself in a large wadded chair; a new and partly-cut book in one hand, a paper-knife in the other. Mr. Ray, after a moment's tossing, and fisting of his pillows, said,—

“Certainly I shall take a glass of water at present, my boy.”

“But you don't like water, do you, uncle?” Arnold asked, rather earnestly.

“Not as a beverage. And I'm sorry that such is my taste. I wish I did. I wish I could hope that it would be possible to like it. That hope I should value more than the present of a cheque for a thousand pounds.”

Arnold stared at his uncle; but the servant just then appearing in obedience to the bell, he didn't speak. A glass of water! It was such an unusual order, that she supposed one of the gentlemen must be ill. It was therefore executed with the utmost despatch. Mr. Ray sipped twice or thrice, with much caution and scant relish.

“I fear,” he resumed, poisoning the vessel on the tips of his fingers, and peering curiously at it, “I am not amphibious

enough for this sort of thing. It's cold, which is a recommendation, though I fear a solitary one."

"Uncle," Arnold asked, honesty shining in his open face, "are you going to turn water-drinker?"

"Do you see any signs of it, my lad?"

"Not any strong ones; but——"

"Nor weak ones either, I guess. Why, it's medicine to me! I am astonished. Water was nothing like this when I was a romping youth. Ah! how delicious I've felt the moor and meadow brook, when, hot, parched, and panting, I've repaired to it and drunk like a thirsty cow! No more of those days, Arnold, for me!" Mr. Ray sighed. He was just on the verge of being guilty of greater weakness. His nephew did not understand—could not appreciate—this bit of sentiment. He was not far enough away from youth to regret having done with it; so he kept to what he regarded as the question before them.

"But, seriously, uncle, are you thinking of confining yourself to water as a beverage?"

"Why, Arnold? Would you like to join me in such an experiment?" The young man was silent. "I'll tell you what it is, my boy," Mr. Ray continued, putting down his glass, and assuming a sitting posture, "this is just a clumsy way of introducing a request to which I should like your favourable attention. You are to live with me in a short while, and also your angel-sister. How happy I shall be to receive you, God only knows. The request is this: That for the first year, at least, of your residing here, you will abstain from all intoxicating drinks. There now! I've always been thought eccentric, and here you've proof positive, haven't you? However, for once, I'm earnestly serious. Don't make a noisy demonstration of astonishment. Don't trouble me for reasons. Assigning reasons is generally to me distasteful. Assigning reasons for this request would be particularly so at present." He took the glass, sipped again, and looking thoughtfully into it, thus proceeded: "Water, Arnold, is insipid. To my depraved taste, intolerably so. It doesn't exhilarate. Doesn't rouse the spirits to a wild dance, nor shoot one's thoughts with lightning rapidity. But——" he paused a few minutes—"in water there is no crime, no madness, no murder! It doesn't blind us to shame and honour, fire us with tiger ferocity, nor smite us with palsy and melancholy. It doesn't create street brawls, and doom innocent children to want; nor beget demons, and bequeath disease and

death. No, nor does it bequeath—but why am I rambling on in this maudlin way? Will you think of my request, Arnold?”

“With pleasure, uncle, and yield it also. To be a water-drinker will cost me no effort; will involve no self-denial.”

“It won’t?” Mr. Ray exclaimed, interrogatively.

“No, uncle.”

“Aren’t you a slave at all to stimulants?”

“Not in the least.”

“Then do what I can’t do: thank God for your glorious liberty, and be careful to preserve it. But no more of this at present, for here are Thompson and James.”

Having attempted to interest the reader in our two friends, we will now furnish a few particulars respecting them. Rowland Ray, upwards of forty, was the eldest son of a respectable family long resident in the neighbourhood. Soon after passing his majority he went to London, where he followed, with much success, a thriving business. At this time he had been owner and tenant of Prospect House about six months. He lived there alone—gossip said he was a widower, mourning the loss of a beautiful wife. He was well educated; rather tall, with dark hair, bushy whiskers, florid face, and restless penetrating eye.

Arnold was the only son of a deceased sister of Mr. Ray, of whom he had been passionately fond. She had been dead many years, since which sad event her children had been amply and cheerfully supported by their uncle.

Mr. Rowland Ray had brothers, who owned and worked a large worsted manufactory. Thompson and James were principals.

“Ah,” observed the former, glancing round the room as he wiped his perspiring brow, “you know what comfort is, you do.”

“I’ve a notion we’ve a pretty lively sense of what idleness is,” Rowland replied, shaking himself out somewhat elaborately for a loll. “Idleness seems to be my vocation. And what’s the best with you?”

“No best with us at present,” Thompson answered; “nothing mounts to the superlative degree. It’s all worst, I think.”

“But worst is superlative, isn’t it, Arnold? Only it’s mounting downwards instead of upwards. What’s the worst, then?”

“Nothing to make fun of,” Thompson rejoined, with morose gravity. “I fear the already groaning concern has received the burden of another family.”

"Indeed; well, what is it?" Rowland demanded, rather sharply; he was impatient of prolix introductions.

"Why, this," James put in, as he stretched himself far beyond the narrow dimensions of a small couch in a corner of the room; "Ned, our carrier, has been dragged by the law of gravitation beneath the wheels of his waggon, and disabled for life; and we have called to ask you to assist in the support of his family. That's plain, brief, and to the point."

"Not at all," Mr. Ray bluntly replied, gathering himself up as if for a controversial spar. "Not at all; to say that the law of gravitation has dragged him beneath the wheels of his waggon is to state half a truth only; I desire, for Arnold's sake, that the *whole* truth be stated, and in no mock-science phrase."

The brothers were astonished. They had not had the shadow of a surmise that he was serious. It was quite his exceptional mood. However, they saw he *was* serious; so they both hastened to state frankly that Edward Hudson had fallen from the waggon's shaft dead drunk, and had been brought home with one leg broken, and symptoms of very grave internal injuries.

"There, my boy!" Mr. Ray exclaimed, glancing significantly in the direction of his nephew. "We'll call this confirmation number one. Drink! drink! Oh, this drink!"

Thompson and James were struck dumb with wonder. How strange seemed the manner and triumph of their brother!

"I say, Arnold," he suddenly resumed, "what if you and I go through this corner of the world, to note and hold up for the public benefit the blessings of the grand old English custom of drinking? It would be a stirring mission, wouldn't it? No lack of sights! Ah!" he continued, steeping his irony in a sarcastic tone, "it's a glorious part of our constitution, this drinking system! A glorious part, indeed! It's a something to be proud of, and to extol and encourage by law and example, isn't it, Arnold?"

"And yet it's in full swing here, or I'm much deceived," Thompson put in, his by no means handsome face shrouded by a dark frown. "He's taking it net, for a shilling."

"Ay, net enough," Rowland replied, rolling over with an air of scorn and discontent. Thompson rose, snatched up the glass, and applied it eagerly to his parched and burning lips.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, spurning out with disgust the insipid liquid. "What makes you take this stuff, Rowl? I supposed it gin."

"And did you find it vinegar, that you make such a wry face?"

"Now, atone for your cruel hoax, brother, by ordering in the bottles. I'm half dead with yesterday's carousal and to-day's heat. Let's be alive. What's your favourite, Arnold?"

"No bottles in here this evening, my dear sir. Your nephew's favourite is that stuff." His right thumb was made to indicate that he alluded to the water in the glass.

"No bottles! what has got possession of the man?"

"Oh, a queer humour, no doubt," Mr. Ray replied. "But I mean what I say, and more. I feel, somehow, strangely firm in my decision. Anything you like to eat that my larder and pantry will afford, also milk, tea, coffee, water, in abundance, but not one drop of spirit shall you have here this evening, unless, like the man old Boyle preached about the other Sunday, you first bind me and then spoil my goods."

Mr. Thompson pished and pshawed most energetically. His contempt quite effervesced. Solid substantial nutritious food, cooling refreshing wholesome beverages, were as ashes to one whose nerves and taste had been thoroughly seasoned by the glass.

"Thank you," James Ray replied, "we are in no need of a feed; so as you refuse to board the bottles, we'll away."

"But how about this poor Hudson?"

"Oh, I presume that as it's your humour to refuse us an hour's social enjoyment, you'll decline to help poor Ned. The economy that stops the circulation of the wine will draw tight the purse-strings."

"I don't see that at all, James, not at all. The connection between the two isn't *quite* as obvious as the noon-day sun in a cloudless sky. And I must be allowed to correct an error of yours, which proves you to be not altogether infallible. It isn't any fit of economy that refuses you the bottles. God knows I'm too often a stranger to such a fit. The reason of this cruel refusal springs from an altogether different source. Respecting this reason, I choose at present to maintain silence. How many children has Hudson?"

"Five," Thompson answered, sulkily.

"Small ones?"

"Small enough."

"Small enough, no doubt, if their father has been a supporter of our grand national institution. But I mean, are they young?"

James answered that they were all under twelve.

"Grand national institution!" Thompson sneeringly repeated. "What mean you, Rowland, by your scorn? You've supported it as liberally as most men."

"I don't deny that, Thompson. It is a failing—I'll not use so lenient a term, it is a sin, a crime, of which I plead guilty. However, I don't see the wisdom or utility of our exchanging sharp words and stirring up angry blood just now. An end to this badinage. I'll second any effort to relieve the distress of this poor family. And with this offer you will allow me to dismiss the subject."

It was dismissed, but not its effects. They lingered, in the form of a languid conversation, ruffled tempers, suspicious glances. The discussion had operated on the two brothers, as the very heat, by which they were then prostrated, was operating in dairies and beer-cellar—created sourness.

---

## CHAPTER II.

MR. ROWLAND RAY.

ARNOLD rose early the following morning. Notwithstanding that it was July, the sun had not been up more than an hour. He threw up his sash, to obtain whilst dressing the benefit of the clear sweet air. Rain had fallen in the night, which, besides freshening fields, gardens, and hedgerows, had decked the drooping corn and uncut grass, thorns and briers and shrubs, with beads that glittered like drops of liquid glass.

He would have a stroll; the glistening landscape and cool breeze and lustrous firmament were so inviting. In search of his boots, he turned into the room in which he left his uncle the preceding evening. He had been smoking. Within the fender reposed a long clean pipe, whilst above, around, beneath, floated the odour of tobacco. This raised the question as to whether Mr. Ray, as was his wont, had taken his whisky. On the table was a glass which contained something. Arnold took it up, peered into it, and smelt. No trace of whisky, or of any other stimulant. To make sure, he inclined it gently, and so elongated its contents as to bring their tongue-shaped tip to the rim of the vessel. He then cautiously moistened his lips. Water! Pure water! That was the only drink, apparently, he had taken with *his pipe*. Strange! More strange to Arnold than had been the

discourses on temperance of the previous evening. It gave a thundering emphasis to what the nephew had regarded as little better than banter.

When Arnold returned from his ramble, hot and hungry, he met Mr. Ray in the front garden. It was not seven, and yet his uncle was up and out! He conjectured that he must be ailing in body, or be troubled in mind. And there was that in the face of Mr. Ray to suggest such a surmise. He was more pale, and seemed more anxious than Arnold had known him. The youth ventured to ask after his uncle's health. The answer was a careless "pretty well."

At breakfast the owner of Prospect House made the following observations, which seemed to puzzle himself, or at least that to which they related did quite as much—and perhaps more—than they interested his nephew:—

"I don't understand this. I'm very hungry, and enjoy my breakfast amazingly. And I'm marvellously free from headache and nausea. Certainly I've passed a sleepless miserable night; but I haven't felt less miserable than this morning for a long while. I wonder now"—he seemed to discourse to the dry toast on which he was spreading, just then, a thick layer of fresh butter—"if this change—I hope I may call it improvement—is owing to half freezing myself with a glass of water last night? If so, it's worth the touch of self-denial. I know this, I never felt thus after the best brandy. If the day hold fine, Arnold, we'll into the hay-field, and work like steam engines; and if it doesn't, we'll away to Broadly, and perhaps to Throng."

Just then "post" arrived, which diverted the conversation into channels we do not care to follow.

The day did not hold. That is, it did not fulfil the hopes it had excited. It was considered as having broken its promise by fickle irreverent men. At ten o'clock the bright sky had become overcast, and was drizzling down a greasy sort of rain.

"Now we'll away, Arnold," Mr. Ray said, preparing to wash and dress, "and visit the maimed, and, perhaps, the poor. It will likely enough give an edge to our appetite for dinner; but let us take care, my boy, that it doesn't inflate our pride. We ought never to allow the consciousness of having done our duty to feed our conceit. Nor would there be much risk of its so doing, if we looked more at the wide distance, stretching away like a sterile waste, between our best obedience and the mark it



ought to reach, and less at our paltry advances in that direction."

We don't know whether Arnold had ever looked seriously at the shortcomings of men in the shape of performances of duty; but we *do* know that he looked hard, even foolishly, at his uncle, as they moved off in the direction of their respective dressing-rooms. To moralize had not been that gentleman's habit; and his nephew was even then in doubt as to whether he was expected to receive the reflections just recorded as sober counsel, or regard them as a mere satire on feigned aspirations after humility. He was perplexed; but in less than an hour he was even more perplexed.

They had mounted the gig in the paved yard, and were arranging the cushions and covers, John still holding the horse's head, when Jane appeared with some steaming brandy-and-water for her master, as a matter of course. She had not asked if she was expected to prepare it; not calling in question for a moment the existence of such an expectation in Mr. Ray's mind. It was what she had done for him as regularly as the conveyance had been brought out. He took it, and holding it in his hand, said, with a gravity quite unusual to him,—

"Jane, I wish to be alive to shame and not dead to honour; to be innocent of murder and in no danger of madness. It therefore appears to me that the best way of disposing of what you have been kind enough to bring me, will be this." He deliberately inverted the smoking tumbler, and splash went its contents on to the pavement.

We need not state, that had Mr. Ray thrown himself from the gig, and dashed from his mortal frame every spark of life before his servant's eyes, her astonishment, whatever might have been her horror, would not have been greater. She could not utter even an interjection. The faculty of speech was entangled in a dense thicket of wonder. Poor John also much marvelled at his master's strange behaviour; but in his case the emotion was mixed with, and somewhat counteracted by, sincere concern at the wilful waste of the good gifts of Providence it involved. Long after the gig rolled away, he hung with tantalized thirst over the stones that had received the offering of folly, as a dog will loiter and snuff and nose about the spot where vermin have hid, or offal lain.

"I've a notion," Mr. Ray observed to his nephew, when they were fairly on the highway, "I'm better without than with it."

Arnold was not sure what reply he ought to make ; so he did not speak. Silence ensued, and the conveyance ran merrily on its way.

Broadly and Throng. The former was a growing village, about a mile from Prospect House, where was the large mill owned and worked by the Rays. The latter was a busy wealthy town, four miles farther south. Had it been a clear day, its site would have been indicated by a thick brown haze, the product of the steaming sweat and dusty tramp and ceaseless smoke of its toil, business, and life.

They halted at Broadly, and drove into a mill-yard—a wide, smoky, ashy area, where the deafening roar and clang of machinery, the shrill call of begrimed workers from open casements, and the backing and whoying of waggons and horses, seemed to Arnold to mingle a riot in wild and purposeless confusion. Mr. Thompson Ray glided out of a doorway and hailed them. To his nephew's astonishment he was cordial and cheerful. The dark clouds that overcast his countenance when he left Prospect House had dissolved and passed away. The horse and gig were placed in charge of a sooty "hand," whose winking and grinning—meant, of course, for Arnold—implied a degree of vivacity which that youth had not supposed so dingy a place capable of either exciting or sustaining. They followed Mr. Thompson up some steps, and entered a counting-house. Here were Mr. James and Mr. Gilbert Ray—the latter the youngest of the brothers—and a Mr. Smirk, the village surgeon. He was a short thin sharp man, with very bright eyes, and a marvellously voluble tongue. He knew something of Mr. Ray of Prospect House, and yearned to know more.

He had called, he repeated, with quite as much pomposity as the business would well carry, about poor Hudson. He would require substantial support, and he had stepped in to lay that fact before the well-known generosity of the firm. Mr. Smirk took some snuff and watched closely, even keenly, the faces of the brothers. In reality, he was not so anxious respecting Hudson's support as his own remuneration. The former was therefore but a feeler, having reference to the latter.

"Of course we must help the man," James observed. "It's a bad job:" he heaved a sigh of true commiseration, and looked thoughtfully at a big ruler he had lifted from the desk.

"The job is bad enough," Mr. Smirk replied, brightening up. Help meant, no doubt, the payment of the surgeon's bill. "Bad

enough," he repeated, as if the reflection afforded him intense satisfaction. "But such accidents *do* and *will* occur, and it's for us, therefore, to be prepared to make the best of 'em"—as *he* meant to do.

"And such things come of the grand custom of drinking away our senses, Mr. Smirk!" Rowland Ray remarked, with loud and firm emphasis, and undisguised contempt.

"Why, yes, they do," the little man meekly assented; "but what is to be done, you see? People will drink, you see!"

"Ay, people will drink, and we who profess to be more sober and better than the many will help them."

"Help them!" the surgeon yelled, interrogatively, as if hurt in some way by the insinuation.

"Yes," Mr. Ray replied, "for don't they drink all the more recklessly for our encouraging the practice by example and custom and law?"

Mr. Smirk felt himself placed in a very delicate position. There was danger in hazarding a reply, so he coughed politely, hemmed energetically, and took a pinch of snuff.

"It's all nonsense," James suddenly blustered off. "All nonsense. It's the old device of throwing the blame of one man's folly on to another man's shoulders. By taking my glass I don't force anybody else to take one. I, for one, won't take any share of my drunken neighbour's sin. Every tub must stand on its own bottom," the speaker oracularly reminded his hearers, looking around with the agreeable consciousness in his face of having treated them to a perfectly original simile.

"What a violent temperance advocate you've become of late, brother!" Thompson observed, looking very bland, and endeavouring to be very agreeable. "I expect we shall soon have to submit to the slavery of water-drinkers, or fight for our liberty, if you go on long at this rate."

Mr. Smirk here attempted so to sniggle, as that Mr. Thompson would be flattered, and Mr. Ray not offended.

"I disclaim any wish to infringe on any man's liberty," the latter gentleman replied, with dignity. "I express myself thus because I believe this drunkenness to be a great evil, an evil of unmeasured and unmeasurable magnitude, an evil that is the parent of a progeny of other evils; and because I do desire, most sincerely and most ardently, that these young friends here will make it a leading aim in life to avoid drunkenness—to shun it as they would death itself."

"Well," Mr. Smirk said, feigning strong and conscientious convictions, "I agree with you in great part, Mr. Ray. In the *main*, understand me, intemperance is an evil. But, my dear sir, so are a thousand other practices at which temperance advocates don't fling a single denunciatory word. But what can one *do* towards checking the evil? Nothing, comparatively. Nothing, emphatically. What's a cobweb with which to restrain an ocean? The evil is so widely spread, so deeply rooted, that you can do nothing with it but let it have its way. So what's the use—I reason in this way—of my denying myself, and fidgeting life away, to achieve what is so clearly unachievable?"

The voluble surgeon here sniffed hard, thrust the thin nail of a small thumb into a seam in his snuff-box, and assisted himself to its contents with the air of a combatant who has thoroughly vanquished his adversary.

"So it appears," that adversary mildly replied, "we don't see things alike. Well, I suppose we must agree to differ."

"Just so, just so," chimed in the surgeon, Mr. Thompson and James, hoping, by the compromise, to get rid of the subject.

"You will admit, however, Mr. Smirk, that abstinence would be a good and safe thing for my nephew here, and for Gilbert, my brother."

"Abstaining, they would be safe from intemperance, certainly," the little man answered with professional caution. "As to its being a *good* thing, that would depend, you see, on constitution, circumstances, and so on."

"What say you, Gilbert?" Mr. Rowland asked. "Will you join Arnold in the pledge?"

"Pooh!" Mr. Thompson put in, with ill-suppressed displeasure. "Don't hamper them with such baby-fetters as pledges! If they miss the pleasures of youth, they won't be able to repair the mistake, for they'll never be young again."

"And for the same reason, brother," said Mr. Ray, "should they be ruined in youth, they'll never be able fully to recover themselves."

Mr. Thompson blushed, and Gilbert said something about not caring if he entered with his nephew the ranks of abstainers for a while.

"That's right, Gilbert," Mr. Ray replied. "We'll see about it some of these days. I'm reminded that I'm forgetting my errand here this morning. It was to inquire for the cottage where Hudson lives." It so happened that the surgeon was on

his way thither; which fact he didn't fail, of course, to state very distinctly.

From this point the conversation became desultory and general; and after some arrangements, having reference to taking tea with Mr. Thompson's family on the morrow, the uncle, nephew, and surgeon departed.

---

### CHAPTER III.

EDWARD HUDSON'S.

"WELL," Mr. Smirk observed, as he and Mr. Ray walked together, Arnold following slowly with the horse and gig, "I'm glad I've met with you, Mr. Ray. Very glad indeed." He took more snuff. "Now, on this subject of temperance, I agree with you, my dear sir, *in the main*, as I said. It's a great, a monstrous, a fearful evil. I mean *intemperance* is. Bless you, I in my profession observe what leaves no doubt of it whatever. Only the other day we had, in this very village, a child burnt to ashes, and all through drink. Fact, sir; a fine child, lived with its grandmother—and something grand she was, in a certain way—its mother being in prison for stealing, by the bye, to obtain money for gin. Home comes the old body, senseless almost as a log; takes the child, as we suppose, on to her knee, falls asleep, maybe, tumbles with it on to the hearth, the poor creature's clothes catch fire, the neighbours scent a peculiar smell, rush into the place, which is filled with smoke, grope about, and to their horror bring to the door the charred body of this child. Of course they hastened for me in a wild hurry, and I returned with despatch, although out dining, sir. But what could I do?—only save the old woman, of course."

"Dear—dear—dear!" Mr. Ray threw in.

"Ay, I could cause you to dear—dear fast enough, sir, if I'd time and opportunity to relate and describe a tithe of what I've seen. Bless you, temperance advocates and lecturers know nothing compared with what we medical gentlemen witness, and just say 'mum' over. It's astonishing, sir, that I'm not a very wild temperance writer and speaker. Very astonishing. I'll come up some of these days, Mr. Ray, and just take a glass of—I beg pardon—just take a cup of tea with you, and talk about these things. I didn't like to say much yonder, you see, as your brother Thompson—a good liberal soul—takes a rather different

view of this subject from what you do, and from what I—between ourselves, mark you—am inclined to do.”

“I should be thankful,” Mr. Ray edged in, “for a few of those recitals, even though they are harrowing to one’s feelings, for my nephew’s sake.”

“Fine looking youth, sir,” the surgeon observed, appealing to Mr. Ray’s pride, and applying to his snuff-box.

“Very, Mr. Smirk.”

“Going to reside with you for some time? I knew his mother. A kind dear creature *she* was.”

“To be candid, doctor, I’m thinking of adopting him, in a way, and am very wishful he should be a total-abstainer. This drinking has done our family no good, as you well know.” The surgeon was discreet enough not to say aught in reply to the last observation. “I have, in a clumsy manner, several times intimated to him my wish, and have said and done odd and foolish things, to impress on his mind my abhorrence of intemperance.”

“Ah,” Mr. Smirk said, reflectively. “And what profession do you intend him for, my dear sir?—Law, Medicine, or Divinity?”

“Oh, I don’t know; indeed I don’t much care about his having any, unless I become a spendthrift.”

“Ah—ah—ah! not much fear of that, Mr. Ray!”

“He’ll not be dependent on any profession.”

“For a livelihood, of course not. But for social *status*, you know”——Mr. Smirk hesitated, not seeing clearly what would be most expedient for him to say on the subject of *status*.

“Oh, I don’t care a fig for that,” Mr. Ray answered, “if so be that he has *status* as an honest, intelligent, liberal, God-fearing man.”

“Hear, hear, sir; glad to hear such sentiments from *your* lips. It’s really refreshing. Hudson’s is the top of the row, sir; a line of good dwellings, Mr. Ray. Your brothers have conferred honours, conveniences, and livelihoods upon us. Fact, sir. Speaking of intemperance, this Hudson’s is a case in point. He’s been in the receipt of twenty-four shillings per week, and considerable incidental emoluments, being a carrier, in a way, and yet he’s steeped to the ears in poverty,—wife bad as husband. She’s a clever woman, taken all in all, but a slave—oh, a dreadful slave—to gin! It reigns paramount here.”

They were at the house. The utterance of the word paramount and the opening of the little gate were concurrent. A

boy—half-a-dozen were in readiness—was allowed to take charge of the horse, and Arnold, in obedience to a sign from his uncle, followed.

Gin reigned paramount without a doubt, and a dreadful reign it was. Lean squalid children, a ragged emaciated wife, and a groaning shattered husband were the miserable victims of its mad dominion. A deal table, strewn with broken crockery; a few old chairs, in extreme decrepitude; an empty meal chest and doorless cupboard; a greasy floor, littered with sandstone and hammers; pans without handles, and stools without legs, struck in an instant Arnold's attention, and shot a sickening pang of pity to his heart. Two grimy little ones were rolling on the hearthstone, buoyant even in such a scene; whilst a boy, the eldest born, was knitting in a corner, a soiled and tattered spelling-book spread out before him. His wan face was a touch freshened by confusion when our friends presented themselves, and Mr. Ray noted that he glanced anxiously at his mother, who, seated on a backless chair, was staring with an expression of drunken stupefaction at their visitors.

Mr. Smirk led the way into a desolate-looking sleeping-room, where two sadly neglected beds had to perform the difficult task of accommodating and resting the whole household. On one of these, hot, flushed, fuming, and half-suffocated by foul air, was stretched Edward Hudson, the surgeon's patient, in a state of appalling wretchedness. Mr. Smirk examined him, Mr. Ray and Arnold looking on and wondering how, by any power of adaptation in the frame of man, human beings could live, or vegetate, in such a habitation. The surgeon shook his head, and intimated—he was in a joking vein—that he considered the waggoner's stay in their "sublunary sphere" very doubtful.

"You see," he observed aside to Mr. Ray, "fever is high, blood bad, and general condition anything but favourable." He stooped to examine the broken limb. "Used the lotion as directed?" he asked, scrutinizing and thumbing the bandaged mass of splintered bones and bruised flesh.

"I known't," was the reply.

"Known't!" the surgeon rejoined; "there's nought known here. Mrs. Hudson!" The wife came creeping in with commendable caution, for she was in that state in which the centre of gravity is with much difficulty found and maintained.

"Have you fomented as ordered?"

"Yes."

"Hum! there is much inflammation," he said, musingly; "more than I like, and much more than I expected. Hollo! what's the meaning of this?" He had turned to the window and taken up a bottle, beside which was a spoon. "What's this spoon doing here, woman?"

"Waiting till his medicine time, to be sure," she morosely replied.

"But you don't give him this bottle?" There was rising consternation in the surgeon's manner.

"No, we don't, but we give him what's in it."

"Woman! what *do* you mean? This is the lotion! Goodness! I marvel the man isn't a corpse."

"She's drunk," Hudson exclaimed, in alarm. "An' she's *allas* drunk. If I'm left wi' her I shall be done for."

The surgeon expressed his utter despair by a deep sigh.

"You deserve whipping," he said, in a tone of exasperation, "whipping down right."

"Whip me, then," she replied firmly. "Do it now, sir! whip life out of me! God knows you'd rid me of a hateful burden!"

Mr. Ray interposed, spoke kindly to her, attempted to reason with her, offered the inducement of handsome pecuniary help if she would keep sober and nurse her husband, and found a way to the distracted woman's heart by which it had not been entered for many long weary years.

"Thank you, sir," she replied, with considerable correctness. Mr. Smirk was astonished. "You speak kindly and sensibly; your voice and manner do me good. You show breeding which to me, wretch that I am, is refreshing. You are a gentleman; I know it, for I, too, have been well brought up, but cannot do without this gin, sir."

"Why?"

"Why, did you say? oh, dear, sir! Without it I should go mad—stark raving mad."

"How so? what does it do for you?" Ah, Mr. Ray, you knew well enough what it did for her, and why she took it. The uncle interrogated, not so much for his own information as for his nephew's benefit.

"Do? it blunts my feelings and muddles my memory," she exclaimed, "and that to me is worth a fortune, sir."

Yes, it hoofed her heart, and rendered her less sensible of her misery; threw a mist around her faculties, through which she saw but dimly her deep degradation. It furnished her with an



oblivion of sorrow, into which she could at any time plunge. Benevolent provision! Poets have sung what a blessing, that by means of the glass, we can rise above, or sink below, dull care. Ay, it is a blessing indeed; we can curse ourselves, without being tormented by a continuous consciousness of the fact; ruin body and soul, and during the process riot for a few brief hours in wild forgetfulness of the terrific truth. A glorious privilege, doubtless, to be rendered insensible to pain, especially if the insensibility arise from some black and fatal rot in the body! A grand thing to be blinded, especially when it is done to shut out of view some dark abyss on to whose crumbling verge you happen just to be stepping; is it not worth a fortune? Answer, O experience!

"A fortune!" Mr. Ray replied, with serious earnestness. "My dear woman, don't talk in this way; you are cursing yourself and family."

"Don't call me dear, sir. I'm dear to no one, unless it be to the Evil One. And don't fling on to me the guilt of what you see in this den. He began it, sir; it was in self-defence, God knows, that I took to it!"

"Well now, will you promise me amendment, if I'll procure you timely help?" She hesitated. "What say you?"

"I'll try. But I fear I am too far gone."

"Nonsense; put on a brave heart," Mr. Ray answered assuringly, slipping at the same time a sovereign into her hand. He longed to whisper of help from above, but was conscious of having so slighted such help himself, that shame kept back his words.

"It will be hard work, sir. Harder than for you to give me money."

"I don't doubt it," he said kindly. "But try. For your children's sake, your husband's sake, your soul's sake, make an effort."

She sank on to the bed, covered her face, and wept. Mr. Ray thought it might be best to leave her to her thoughts, so, promising to call again on the morrow, he bade them good-by.

More sad than tired, uncle and nephew arrived at Prospect House in time for dinner. From Broadly they had driven to Throng, where some purchases of books and pamphlets were made, and where they witnessed a street brawl of a fierce and fatal character, which, as Mr. Ray was careful to ascertain, had had its origin solely in drink. After dinner, the uncle, with the

publications they had bought spread out before him, thus addressed his nephew:—

"I fear, Arnold, this has been to you a dull day. Its engagements haven't certainly been those most congenial to youth. Then, in addition; I've behaved oddly, perhaps foolishly. I can imagine you asking yourself the meaning of it all. My lad"—Mr. Ray leaned forward, and spoke with all the seriousness of one giving a funeral address—"It means this: that I believe intemperance to be a fearful evil, a gigantic curse; that we ought to set our faces against it; and that I should like you to give me a promise, that from this hour you will abstain from all intoxicating drinks."

"I will, uncle," Arnold promptly and cheerfully replied.

"And keep your promise?"

"Of course."

"God helping you."

"God helping me, I will."

"Now let me remind you, my lad, that it will be no easy thing to keep your promise. Abstinence isn't yet a fashionable virtue. The many drink, and what the *many* do, it is difficult not to do. There is an infection about custom. Numbers are like a whirlpool; they draw hard. Your temperance will be laughed at as an indication of weakness, a fondness for change, a morbid hankering after notoriety. Be prepared for banter, lampoon, sarcasm—even from such as your uncle, who ought to rejoice in your sobriety. Don't be seduced from your steadfastness by anything that may be said about its being unmanly to be bound by a pledge. Unmanly! What is that which passes with the majority for manliness? A compound of impudence and folly, which I trust you will be man enough to scorn and eschew. Unmanly indeed! to shun that which robs men of health, and intellect, and virtue, and even life; what nonsense! In the face of all ridicule, be firm and unyielding as a rock. You have seen something of the evils of drunkenness to-day. Think of them. Then let me request you to read carefully those publications. I've purchased them for your special use. They contain expositions, and I trust they are faithful ones, of the drinking system. You will accept them, please, as a present from your unworthy uncle, who has suffered more from the bewitching power of the glass than any mortal tongue can describe. What I now say, Arnold, derives weight from this circumstance; that I've experienced some of the evils of the custom I'm denouncing.

It has robbed me of peace, and I sometimes fear it has rendered it folly for me to hope. And without peace and hope, what is life? I've a good house and a beautiful world—more beautiful than I deserve—to dwell in. But happiness I don't find. I have no expectation, indeed, of finding it. My conduct has been foolish and outrageous, and my experience dark and bitter; one consequence of which is, that my memory is a storehouse of goading scourging recollections. But there is no injustice, that I can see, in the arrangement by which I suffer. I've sown and I'm reaping. I filled, with my own hand, the cup of gall that I am drinking. Filled it wilfully, in spite of, in the very face of, pulpit and private warning and remonstrance. But no more of this now. Take heed, and sow to the Spirit." Arnold promised to do so, and the subject was dropped.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### AN EVENING AT ROOK COTTAGE.

MR. THOMPSON RAY lived in a good house, which we will call Rook Cottage. His family consisted of a wife and six children: the eldest was a beautiful daughter; the next a hopeful son—at least so thought and declared his sanguine mother.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray had cause for great thankfulness. In the judgment of their less favoured neighbours, they possessed abundance. They *ought* to have been happy. But alas! such experience is not realized in *this* world in the ratio of our mercies and blessings; and how potent are apparently trivial things in preventing our happiness—the dead fly causeth the apothecary's ointment to stink.

Mrs. Thompson had sources of vexation at this time, and amongst them was the favour shown to Arnold Haworth by his uncle Rowland. It placed in jeopardy what she regarded as the reasonable expectations of her eldest son, Pearson. As Thompson was Mr. Ray's next brother, and Pearson his father's heir, it appeared to her that his right to all which Rowland possessed was indisputable, and that therefore any fondness or affection for Arnold, that rendered probable even a small bequest, pointed to an act of gross injustice to her son. Here was a tangible annoyance, and one that called for and warranted more than a touch of diplomatic craft. She considered herself justified in denouncing Mr. Rowland to his brother. Arnold's parents were dead; why, therefore—why indeed?—should his uncle take him to

his home and bosom, and prefer him to, or even place him on an equality with, the son of a living brother? She would not, however, quarrel with them; that might prove most disastrous to Pearson; rather she would show them every attention; have them as often as possible at Rook Cottage; feast them; keep their eldest son at his uncle's side, and compel him, in a way, to notice, love, help, and enrich him. The invitation already alluded to was part of this stratagem.

Something else she would do, or attempt. She heard with scorn and chagrin of Mr. Rowland's temperance fit, and Arnold's temperance policy. With the readiness of intuition, Mrs. Thompson Ray saw that it was very desirable to accomplish one of three things: either to laugh, reason, or frighten Rowland out of his temperance; to prevail on Pearson to take the pledge; or to prevent Arnold becoming a confirmed abstainer.

The first she had small hopes of achieving, as she knew her brother-in-law was a man of remarkable force and decision of character. The second she tamely attempted without the slightest success. Although not fifteen, their hopeful boy had begun to seek the exhilaration yielded by intoxicating stimulants. He had been allowed, encouraged, now to sip them as a manly custom, and now to use them as a vaunted tonic, until they had become a fancied necessity. She was shut up to the third device, and was therefore resolved in her own mind, that by one trap, or another, the orphan lad should be made as great an offender in regard to the taking of spirituous liquors as Pearson Ray, at least.

Well, evening came, and a lively company assembled at Mr. Thompson's, including Mr. and Mrs. Smirk, their son Henry, Mr. James Ray, his brother Gilbert, and others. We will give the purport—not of course every word—of the conversation that took place that evening.

Mrs. Thompson Ray, so soon as a pause in tea-making afforded an opportunity for a few observations, expressed herself thus:—

"I am so glad to see you, Arnold; you *have* grown so; but you look pale. I fear he's delicate, Mr. Rowland."

"Oh, not much ground for fear, Emma, I trust," Rowland carelessly replied.

"I should be indeed sorry if there were; but has he stamina, think you? You see I look at stamina, doctor. If there isn't stamina, I say to Thompson, why, what is there?"

"Just so," Mr. Smirk answered, nearly choking himself with hot tea—purposely, of course.

"Ah, I see, Arnold, we must look elsewhere. Well, let it be so; I approve of young people being young. Youth only comes once; only take care, as I say to Pearson there, and be in moderation."

Rowland stared about in utter bewilderment, and Arnold's face was covered with what appeared to be guilty blushes.

"I don't understand you, Emma?" her brother-in-law said.

"Perhaps not, perhaps not; but *we* understand each other, don't we, my dear? However, no school tales at present. I don't blame you, Arnold."

"Blame me, blame me!" the lad said to himself, puzzled to imagine what she could mean. Her insinuations were quite as perplexing as they were painful.

"Ah, it appears your aunt and you have some secrets, Arnold," Thompson cruelly observed, increasing the boy's confusion.

"I'm not aware that we have," he managed to stammer out, not sure a minute afterwards what he had said.

"Oh, dear!" Mrs. Thompson exclaimed in mock alarm, elevating her voice considerably. "You mustn't charge me with falsehood in such a company—it would be ungallant. Well, we will make it all right some day, won't we? In the meanwhile, look to your health, my dear. Do you allow him a little porter, Rowland?"

The word porter fell with quite a jerking effect on the little surgeon. He was alarmed, for he foresaw an angry controversy, in which it would be highly inexpedient to join, and yet to keep out of it would be difficult.

"He's not had any, I believe, for the last few days," Rowland Ray replied; there was hardness in his voice.

"There now! that suggests something else. I was fighting for you so bravely yesterday, brother." This was said in a way meant to be very pleasant. "A lady stated that you had joined the Temperance Society, setting thereby a whole company a-tittering, and kindling the displeasure, I assure you, of your sister."

"Well," Mr. Rowland said, his eyes suddenly becoming restless, and his ears as red as if they were being toasted, "and what did you say?"

"That I was sure there was no truth in it."

"And what beside? Did you add that I never should join such a society?"

"Yes, I maintained you were too respectable for that."

Temperance societies are low things, joined by—indeed meant for—the common people. Pledges argue conscious weakness. Taking the pledge is like a man tethering himself lest he should wander where he ought not; or muzzling himself, so that when in a biting mood he may do no one any harm. That's my notion of a pledge, and I hardly think you are the man so to tie yourself up."

"Then when I *do* take it, you will proclaim me a poor, deluded, weak-minded simpleton?"

"No, sir; I shall hope even then. I shall probably say what I hinted yesterday; namely, that you are moved by some noble disinterested motive. I shall scorn the explanation then offered."

"Pray what was that?" Rowland asked, in a tremor of excitement. "It cannot but be interesting to hear one's conduct explained."

"That you had taken the pledge to obtain the hand of a certain lady, who has been active in the Temperance movement."

Had it been possible, by any imputation, or insinuation, to turn Mr. Ray from his Temperance intentions, and drive him in recklessness to the glass, this was the one that would have done it. And Mrs. Thompson knew it, of course. Knew how that he was noble, unselfish, far removed from hypocrisy. How that he loathed it with heart and soul.

"Ah," he replied, with a sigh, "we are liable, I see, Emma, to misunderstand one another." With this observation he would have liked to turn away from the subject, for he perceived it was distasteful to the company. It appeared to him, however, that it was his duty to be faithful to his convictions, as well as to set Arnold an example. He therefore continued thus:—"I will, however, assure you, if you will allow me, that unless I very much miscalculate my own powers of self-control and resistance of temptation, I shall abstain henceforth from all beverages containing alcohol."

"Really, really! and what can be your reason?"

"I've many reasons," he replied, looking around on the listening company. "One is that I don't believe I should be any better, but the worse, for continuing to take such beverages. They are not necessary. More, they are hurtful. Then I look upon it as my duty to discountenance by act, as well as denounce by word, the drinking system; it's the root of untold, of indescribable suffering, misfortune, and misery. Who'll say it isn't? Don't tell me it is unmanly to take the pledge!—unmanly indeed! it is

unmanly to show a man how to escape ruin? how he may build up his health, benefit his family, and keep himself out of the power of a terrible demon? Is it unmanly to withhold support from dens of infamy and authors of untold wretchedness, which I maintain our inns and beer-houses are? If there be one thing in this world of deceptions and mistakes that it is *obviously* our duty to attend to, that one thing is abstinence from all intoxicating drinks! How *can* there be, whence can there be, a doubt of it?"

Not a voice was raised in reply; all were astounded, the speaker was so unlike his former self. So earnest, so eloquent, so serious—*could* it be Mr. Rowland Ray, the once caustic scoffing creedless man of the world, who carried a quiver of polished sarcasms for professions of all descriptions?

Mrs. Thompson for once had made a mistake; her hopes were clouded, her scheme frustrated. She had meant to turn Rowland from his purpose; she had confirmed him in it. Driven to make an avowal of his Temperance sentiments, he was just the man to abide by them all the more tenaciously on that very account.

Disappointed, chagrined, conscious of a defeat, but mentally resolving to return to the combat, she announced, as they rose from the tea-table, that the young people—the youths—would repair to Pearson's room. To Pearson's room we will follow them; for this, amongst other valid reasons, that we happen to know much better how the juniors deported themselves that evening than what their seniors did and said.

Pearson's room was a rather small apartment. It contained a table, book-case, couch, easy chairs, and sundry convenient fixtures and fittings. On the broad mantel-shelf, there were cigar-cases, well replenished, a white jar crammed with highly-flavoured tobacco, some long pipes, and a box of matches. In the small cupboard were bottles, containing what were popularly considered necessities to jovial fellowship—gin, rum, brandy, and whisky—Irish and Scotch. Into this apartment, a friend of Pearson's, Edward Yates, led the way, and with a bounce of joyous relief, flung himself on to the couch, exclaiming at the same time,—

"Oh! what a nuisance this uncle of yours is, Pearson; bah! this temperance—why should a fellow mope through life hanging down his head like a half-dead donkey? Why should he, Harry?" This was to Henry Smirk, who, remembering just then certain cautions addressed to him by his discreet father, replied,—

"Just so, why should he?"

"Hollo!" the buoyant Yates went off, as his eye fell on the mantel-shelf. "Pipes! hurroar—and cigars too! and quite a little fodder of tobacco! Well now, this *is* luck, and no mistake. You smoke, don't you, Harry?"

"Smoke!" Pearson exclaimed, "that he does! summat like a steam engine!"

"That's right." He took up and blew through one of the pipes. "But I say," he went on, after pronouncing the instrument perfect, "are these comforts here with the knowledge and consent of the higher powers?"

"Oh, yes!" Pearson answered; "mother ordered them to be brought in."

"Capital! your mother is one in a thousand. You're without mother, aren't you, Arnold?" Edward Yates asked, as he charged his pipe.

"Yes, sir."

"More's the pity, I say; she'd have taken care that you weren't starved to death on water, lad, if she'd been living." Arnold blushed. "Ah," the speaker went on, yet in no strain of irony, "nought like a mother, gentlemen, for a touch of true loving; 'pon my word, how they'll look after one! how tough is this fondness of theirs; what insults it will carry; how they'll sigh and fret, if you're not looking quite so well as you are wont. And how they'll sit up for you when spreeing, and open the door softly as the opening of morn, that the servants and the senior mayn't know that you are just landing. And how they'll feed you, and clothe you, and supply you with pocket cash, and screen you in a scrape. Mothers are a fine institution!"

Reader: whether young man, or maiden, never trifle with the name, affection, wasting anxieties, maternal solitudes, of your mother. Let them be sacred to you; neither laugh at, nor requite with ingratitude, even her unreasoning indulgence. Many would give all they possess for the opportunity to heal a mother's wounds, inflicted in the hour of their blind wantonness, or supposed manliness. I believe Edward Yates lived to be numbered amongst such.

The door opened, and a servant appeared with a tray, on which were pitchers containing hot and cold water, jingling glasses, sugar, spoons, and wine.

"Hurroar, Mary!" Edward exclaimed, "you know what's what, I see; but I say, Pearson," he continued, elevating his



voice, rounding his eyes, and putting on an air of alarm, 'there's to be something a touch more stirring than negus, isn't there? rather tame, that, with all deference to the colonel.'

"Oh, never fear," Harry Smirk replied assuringly, "Pearson's up to aught. Just open that little door behind you: I've been here before, you see." The last sentence was an aside to Arnold, who had no doubt it was quite true.

"Well," Mr. Yates vociferated, "this is a sight to behold! remedies here for {all complaints, all ages, all sizes; I'm inclined now to sing with Tom Moore,—

'Come, send round the glass, and leave points of belief  
To simpleton sages and reasoning fools;  
This moment's a flower too fair and too brief  
To be withered and stained by the dust of the schools.'

"Don't you think so, Arnold? Come, you'll take a glass, just one, to 'blige—not an old but new friend. Won't you?"

"Not any, thank you, sir," Arnold replied; he was respectful, yet firm. His uncle's decision and uncompromising manner had nerved him amazingly.

When several glasses had been compounded and quaffed, when cigar-fragrance and spirit-fumes had mingled and filled the room, when the ceaseless clatter of tongues had become senseless, the natural atmosphere oppressive, and the social one polluting, Arnold, half stifled and wholly disgusted, intimated that he should withdraw, not doubting that his friends would consent thereto; as, relieved of the restraint of his presence, they would be likely to enjoy all the more their songs and noise and revel. But no, at any rate, before doing so, he must take his glass. Edward Yates insisted on it. Pearson, for the twentieth time, declared he "ought to," and even Harry Smirk, who had been carefully and repeatedly counselled not to insult in any way, but rather to humour and flatter Arnold, couldn't see—he tried to look at the thing—any impropriety in designating the nephew a "noodle," and his uncle another, for taking on so wi' tem—rance.

Arnold rose to depart; Yates staggered to the door and locked it, declaring that young Haworth should not depart without either taking a glass, or trying his hand at a fight. The announcement was received with a loud laugh. It was a capital joke—yes, a piece of rare fun; the scene that evening is still distinctly remembered,

Arnold was no champion, no fighter even; Yates was at least three years his senior, and boasted of a strong arm; nevertheless,

Mr. Rowland's nephew instantly resolved, as he drew himself up, pale and agitated, to submit to all the vengeance Edward Yates might be able to wreak upon him, rather than allow alcoholic liquor to pass his lips.

"Mix him a glass of pure stuff!" his bullying persecutor called out. The glass was mixed, Arnold begging during the time to be allowed quietly to leave them.

"Now then, you take it; you shan't go away and tell everybody how much soberer you are than we."

"I'm sorry I can't oblige you, sir."

"Sorry you can't oblige me! you *can* oblige me. You fib, sir. Drink!"

"No, sir."

"I say drink!"

"I shan't."

"You *will*."

Arnold was silent but firm. A hush settled down on what a minute before was a stormy scene. The lookers on were excited and apprehensive. Yates was strong, active, resolute, and fearless of consequences; and Arnold betrayed no signs of cowardice. Surely, they said to themselves, he'll yield. If he doesn't, he'll be knocked down like an ox, and half suffocated with brandy.

"Do you take it?" Yates demanded, holding out the glass.

"I've promised to abstain from all alcoholic drinks, sir, and therefore I cannot oblige you."

"But I've resolved you shall *not* abstain, therefore you'll have to oblige *me*. I don't understand the word cannot in such a connection. Drink!"

"No, sir."

"I say drink!" Arnold shook his head. "You won't?" Yates seized him, but young Haworth managing in some way to glide out of his grasp, the former fell and broke the glass. This disaster and defeat enraged him. He sprang to his feet and snatched up another vessel. Smirk and Pearson, alarmed, interposed and begged him to desist. He wouldn't. His fury was rising beyond control. He wasn't going to be beaten. He didn't know what yielding was, except as practised by his adversaries. He rushed past them and dashed some hot gin-and-water into Arnold's face. This was not enough. He attacked the blinded youth with the ferocity of a tiger. Once, twice, he was shaken off, but returned with his savagery inflamed. There

was the sound of a blow, and symptoms of a severe struggle. He had struck the lad on the face and was attempting to grasp his throat. Yielding to the instinct of self-preservation, Arnold, hardly knowing what he did, wheeled round with great suddenness and force, and by this rotatory motion, sent his antagonist with a terrific bound across the room. A heavy groan and stillness followed. Yates had fallen with his head against a sharp corner of the couch, and was bleeding from a deep cut near the base of the skull. Arnold was alarmed. He hadn't meant it. Of course Pearson maintained he had. Mr. Smirk was called in, the company following in a state of painful excitement. Mr. Rowland Ray was at first horrified; Arnold overwhelmed with distress. Soon, as the surgeon pronounced Mr. Yates not dangerously hurt, an investigation was commenced. Pearson threw all the blame on to Arnold. His mother was delighted. It was some compensation for the humiliating defeat she had met. Gilbert insisted on the accused being allowed a hearing. He stated the naked truth, which, being flatly contradicted by his cousin, was somewhat sceptically received. Fortunately for him, truthful and reliable testimony was here supplied by Edward Yates himself, who, sufficiently recovered and sobered to talk connectedly, said,—

"Arnold, come here. Pardon me, lad. All the blame rests on me; you're a noble fellow. I was maddened by brandy. I deserve all I've got. Now don't you say, any of you, a harsh word to or about Arnold in regard to this foolish affair. Pearson, you didn't speak the truth. You know you didn't. Don't excuse me and blame him. You know I tried to make him drink. But what right had I to do so? I wish I could practise temperance. I'm ruining myself. I know I am. Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

Mr. Smirk urged him to be calm, and try to sleep. Composure and rest were of vital moment to him.

The company soon after separated, Mrs. Thompson declaring loudly that it was owing to Rowland's foolish temperance notions, and Mr. Gilbert asseverating, even somewhat savagely, that it was not.

The events of the evening led Mr. Ray to meditate, and finally resolve upon a slight modification of his plans in regard to his nephew. We have written *slight*, because at that time it appeared to him to be such, but in *reality* it was not so, as our narrative will probably show.

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## CHAPTER V.

## A. HOMELY CONVERSATION.

ARNOLD was to have two years more of schooling, at least; his uncle determined that during this time he should board and lodge with a pious family, for he felt it desirable that his nephew should be placed under the best of religious influences. This was the modification suggested by what had transpired at Mr. Thompson Ray's.

A good school was found near to the village, which we will name Downsley; also a respectable family, with accommodation for a gentleman, which family and accommodation appeared to Mr. Rowland all that could reasonably be wished for. It was therefore settled that Arnold should attend Mr. Hill's school, and board and lodge with the family of the Rev. John Jones, —minister.

Arnold went to school, and Mr. Rowland was once more alone. The uncle reasoned earnestly with his nephew before his departure on the subject of temperance; he trusted that the lad's convictions were strong and deep, and that his reasons for being an abstainer were forcible to himself, at least. He relied much on Arnold's reading, and not a little on what he had heard Mr. Smirk relate at Prospect House, regarding the evils of the drinking system.

Mr. Ray's time dragged on heavily; life was a burden rather than a joy. In his solitude the glass became a strong temptation; he hankered for the exhilaration it yielded. His abstinence was attended at times by deep depression; this he knew was one of the consequences of his former habits. Those, he often remarked to Mr. Smirk, had so vitiated the nervous energy of his system, that it could not yield him necessary animal spirit; he struggled bravely, however, and in a measure successfully; for by food, exercise, and employment, he so far restored the tone of his shattered nerves, as to be able to feel sometimes even buoyant, without the illusive help derived from intoxicating beverages.

He experienced an opportune interest in Edward Hudson's family; he called frequently, each time more deeply impressed with the evil and power of drunkenness, and more solicitous to raise the carrier and his wife from their deep degradation. The former was slowly recovering, the latter making strenuous efforts

to shake off the power of intemperate habits. Their benefactor endeavoured in particular to animate the wife to perseverance.

"Persevere," he said one day to her, when she called, at his request, at Prospect House, "and by the blessing of God you will save your children from ruin; relapse, and you seal their doom."

"I believe it, sir; but what am I to do? When he gets out, he'll be sure to be as bad as ever, and I must have it to keep up. I cannot live in poverty and neglect and want without it."

"Mrs. Hudson, it's the way to poverty and neglect and want. A way straight as an arrow,—it certainly is. But why should he be bad as ever? Can't we reform him? He's a man, and many men have been brought round."

"Reform him!" she exclaimed, with scornful incredulity and disgust.

"Yes, reform him. Don't you think, now, that kind words and a tidy home and clean children and a bright fire and a loving wife would do much towards keeping him from the alehouse?"

"Not much, I fear; drunkards haven't much taste for such things."

"I differ from you. At any rate, if they haven't a taste for a tidy home they dislike an untidy one: uncomfortable homes drive men away."

"Let them make 'em comfortable, then."

"But doesn't that belong rather to wives?"

"There you are, sir! like the whole selfish tribe of husbands, imposing all the duty and throwing all the blame on to the wife. Poor drudge! she can't do or suffer enough to satisfy some men."

"Nay, not so. But suppose you try."

"And suppose I succeed?"

"Well, you'll be rewarded."

"How?"

"How?—you'll be happy, of course."

"I doubt that, sir; the family might be happier than now, but I shouldn't: I should have to be sober, and when sober I'm miserable."

"Why?"

"Why?—because when sober I'm low, and am always thinking,—and oh, sir! I can't bear to think—my thoughts cut

me like knives. Do you know what it is to have passages in your life—but you don't—that won't bear looking at, that pierce and goad you like iron spikes when in meditation you revisit them? Meditation, sir, is murder to my peace, or would be if I had any."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Hudson?"

"What I say, sir. May I confide in you, and give you my history, which I've not whispered into a single ear in Broadly?" Mr. Ray signified that it would interest him to know a little about her, and that he would not abuse her confidence. This was the substance of her communication:—She had been well educated. Her father was at one time a prosperous manufacturer. He took to drinking, however, neglected business, failed, and was reduced to beggary. He and her mother died in London in extreme poverty. Her sisters had gone to America, but she hadn't been able to tear herself from her native land. To gain a livelihood by sewing for the factory hands she had come to Broadly, where she became acquainted with Hudson. She found out, to her great grief, when too late, that he was a confirmed drinker. She had struggled on until all hope faded from her leaden prospects, when, to drown her sorrows, she took to gin.

Mr. Ray was much moved by the woman's recital. He had known her father slightly, and did not, therefore, doubt in the least the truth of what she said. A cordial yet respectful intimacy grew up between them, which continued through many and vital changes.

November came, and found great transformations at Edward Hudson's. His home bloomed brightly and cheerfully. Repaired furniture, whitewashed walls, a clean and sanded floor; order and comfort had taken the place of the chilly desolation that reigned there in July. His children were at school and well clad; his wife neatly dressed and sober. But no part had Hudson taken in this work of home renovation. It was the doing of his wife, aided of course by the purse of Mr. Ray. She had given that gentleman a promise that not another drop of alcoholic liquor should pass her lips, unless medically prescribed. To carry out her promise had been a severe task. Hard had she battled with her depression and her husband's importunity. Sometimes she even feared abstinence might drive her to suicide; but when extreme lowness and misery were heavy upon her, she roused herself up and declared that to suicide

she would be driven rather than yield. From the children she had resolved to keep the cursing poison. With intoxicating drinks she taught them to associate the want and wretchedness which some of them very vividly remembered. Cheerfully did they promise to become abstainers, to become haters even of drink and drunkenness.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Hudson found it less easy to make a convert of her husband. Practically, he was an abstainer, but that was necessity: he was not strong enough to visit the ale-house, and his wife was too discreet to visit it for him. And in keeping beer from him her conscience did not accuse her of undutifulness, inasmuch as Mr. Smirk had declared that the substantial fare supplied by Prospect House rendered stimulating beverages altogether unnecessary to his recovery. She panted to starve out, to entirely destroy his taste for drink before his complete convalescence, or to get from him a solemn promise not to visit in future the public house.

"You see," she observed one day, when they were seated beside the fire alone, "we could make ourselves so comfortable. We could do our duty to the children, ourselves, and our God, and should be living to some purpose."

Her husband replied that his neighbours and friends would laugh at him if he took the pledge.

"Never mind; better be laughed at for doing a good thing than enticed to do a bad 'un. Don't care for people's laugh; it can't harm you, but to heed it may injure you. Those who would laugh at you for being sober will laugh at you when drunk. There are always some ready to giggle others into folly, aye, into destruction; and, when there, they don't know any derision biting enough for them."

"But I sud shame so."

"Why, for what?"

"Oh, a reformed drunkard's such a hawful sight. I've seen some: heads down, seedy black, out at elbows, an' ivery one pointin' at 'em; I couldn't stand it."

"But what's a *confirmed* drunkard? what are thousands of them?—miserable slaves whom nobody respects; who make brutes of themselves, paupers of their families, and gentlemen of their landlords. Couldn't stand it! couldn't you stand seeing your children have a comfortable home, and getting on like other people's children? and couldn't you stand seeing your wife happy, and feeling that you were out of debt?—couldn't you stand that?"

"Why, yes," Ned replied slowly, as if suspicious that he was making a very imprudent concession: "that 'ud do weel enif, but I don't like laughing at for a fool."

"Don't like laughing at for a fool! but you *are* so laughed at. At least you are considered foolish by——"

"Who considers me foolish?" Hudson asked, in quite a rage.

"Considers you foolish, man? Every sensible person who knows you. He's like to do; *must* do. For *aren't* you foolish? Doesn't every drunkard show a want of sense? Didn't I? Oh, Edward! how thoughtless! how deluded! how hard hearted are tens of thousands who drink! For what do they drink? What have you and I been gulping down these years?—The poor children's food, when we knew they were pining! Their clothing, when we saw them shivering in the cold! Their warmth by night and comfort by day! Their schooling, health, prospects! These precious things we've sacrificed for the maddening draught! We've risked even their salvation itself! And yet, Edward, they're our offspring. It's our duty more than any one's else to provide them with bread and clothing and learning. Oh! fearful has been our neglect! Dark, heavy, angry is our guilt! Let's reform!"

"Thou talks like a parson," Hudson observed, his pale face whitened by emotion.

"And I mean to live summat like one, too! And intend you to do so!"

"Me? Nay, it's hardly got to that, I think."

"My eyes are open, thank God! and I don't mean to neglect the right use of 'em. I trust I see a way out of this poverty and disgrace we are in."

"We're poor, Martha, but where's our disgrace thou talks so foilysh about?"

"Where is it? Where isn't it? Isn't it a disgrace to us that we have robbed our children, our home, and ourselves? And isn't there proof of this robbery on every hand? And isn't it a shame, that with thirty shillings a week we are over ears and head in debt? That we can't look our grocer in the face? That the milk-can has been twenty times returned this year? That those suits of clothes which are now rags are unpaid for? Disgrace indeed! I burn like one in a fever as I talk about it!"

"Then don't talk about it," Edward replied, excited and hot.

"But I will, because I'm determined to remove it."



"But talking won't do it."

"No, but I'm hoping to persuade you to help me by talking."

"What can I do?"

"Sign the pledge."

"I tell you I don't like it."

"Do you like all this debt better? And that your children should be spit at and put upon and fought because they are poor?"

"Are they fought?"

"Tom had to fight his way past the Robin Hood last evening."

"Indeed! Who meddled wi' him?"

"That impudent boy of Ellis's."

"Why?"

"Because Tom told him it was no business of his if his mother had taken the pledge."

"Tom was right. But if Ellis knew he'd blow up, an' hide that youngster, I know. He allas thowt a deal o'me, did Ellis."

"Indeed! Then why *didn't* he hide him, as you call it?"

"Did he get to know of it?"

"Get to know of it! He watched it from his own door. And more: because his boy couldn't thrash Tom, he sent another to help him. So says Tom, and I can believe him."

"The villain! But did Ellis know Tom?"

"Know him! Judge: for the boy alleges, that in answer to an inquiry, he heard Ellis say that he was the son of Ned Hudson. And more than that: he says he heard him call you a drunken ragamuffin. And more even than that, he heard him add that you had unfortunately escaped getting killed a few months back. There's for you, now! And this is after you've carried him scores of pounds."

Hudson stared with a look of severe desperation into the fire.

"What say you to temperance now?" his wife continued.

"You hear how those landlords will speak of their best customers. By their money drunkards make them rich, and then they despise the deluded victims for being poor."

"Ellis has got my last penny," he declared with firm emphasis.

"We owe him something, and he shall have it: but if I may have my way, we've done helping to make landlords' families gentlefolks."

"I've been a fool, I see that," Hudson observed meditatively.

"So have I been one. But it's not too late to mend. Oh, let us do so, and do so without delay. It would delight Mr. Ray, I know it would. We should find a friend in him, for he somehow seems much inclined to help us. What say you?"

"I'll see, I'll see," he replied, biting his lip.

Mrs. Hudson ceased. She thought it best to leave him to his musings. She saw he was disgusted with himself, with his character and former life, and hoped that his brooding might evolve from the chaos and tumult within some noble resolution.

In three days she obtained from him a promise that he would become an abstainer. That promise was to her a golden germ, which she trusted would be developed by care and attention into a bright and happy life.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A TEMPERANCE LECTURE.

MR. RAY resolved to do something with a view to the reclamation of the drunkards of Broadly; accordingly, on his return home, after an absence of several weeks, he wrote to a gentleman in Throng, to whom we will apply the name Noble, asking for counsel and assistance in this work.

The Rev. Alexander Noble was an eloquent and popular expounder of the principles of Temperance; he expressed his readiness to do aught he might be able, calculated to extend the movement. The Odd Fellows' Rooms were engaged, and placards in superfluous abundance distributed, announcing that a lecture would be delivered in the evening of New Year's Day, by the Rev. A. Noble, on the subject of Temperance.

This announcement created intense excitement: it was the first notification of an attack on the interests of the publicans; the first organized effort to overthrow a social custom regarded, of course, with special favour; besides, it was an open censure of the drunkard and an insult to the moderate men. The landlords were furious; the patrons of secret drinking indignant; hence Temperance was loudly and bitterly denounced; the publicans discovered, and, for the information of religious societies, declared that abstinence was meant as a substitute for piety; whilst others were made to believe that it was an artful mode of getting rid of the poor, which had had its origin in Malthusian views and sympathies. Some affirmed that it was a movement

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started by the monopolists of political power, intended to strike at the root of that freedom of discussion enjoyed in the beer-shops of the country; and not a few supposed that it was an arrant swindle, although what was purloined, or who, excepting those said to have been swindled, were gainers, were questions they would have found it difficult to answer.

The Temperance movement was therefore stoutly opposed in Broadly, as elsewhere; public sentiment, interests, prejudices, hatred of innovation, combined to resist its gaining foot-hold. The cry was, "Crucify it! Crucify it! it is not fit to live!"

And not alone did those whose gains were in jeopardy raise this cry; it was taken up by miserable men, ruined by the monster it was meant to slay, and swelled by ragged, starving, cadaverous-looking wives, who had reason for bitter mourning and lamentation, that ever their husbands tasted intoxicating drinks. The cry mingled with the wail of want in fireless and foodless homes, and found utterance even amongst godly people, made sad a hundred times, and a hundred times disgraced, by the bewitching power of the glass. Groups of maudlin loungers, whom drink had stricken with disease and poverty and despair, managed to hiccough the wild demand; nor were ministers of the Holy Gospel backward to sneer from the pulpit at temperance, and popularize the clamour for the movement's death. Night after night choruses of curses on Mr. Noble mingled with the hot fumes and smoke of the Robin Hood; and scores of hungry, maddened victims of indolence and drunkenness proffered to Mr. Ellis, for a few gallons of poisoned ale, to hoot down the lecturer, disperse in consternation his auditory, and prevent the formation of any Temperance society in Broadly.

O human nature! into what a hideous jumble of inconsistencies art thou capable of being moulded! How thou canst oppress, even when ostentatiously asserting thy love of freedom! what injustice practise, and yet boast of thy fair play! At the bidding of sordid interest, of blind, unreasoning prejudice, thou wilt hound down and worry and devour the benefactor offering thee the help thou needest most! Thou wilt fight thine own highest welfare; yea, fling thyself into black perdition, and drag thither thine own shrieking offspring, for a dirty pleasure, or to win an empty "well done" from the treacherous lips of a cunning enemy! How "the perverseness of transgressors" destroys them!

Mr. Noble, lion-hearted in a cause approved by conscience,

reason, and his Bible, made his appearance at the time appointed; notwithstanding that sundry messages, bristling with menaces, had been sent to him by the patriotic people of Broadly. He was accompanied by a chairman from Throng, Mr. Ray having declined to fill so prominent a post. A noisy crowd collected, some to listen, some to hoot; some determined to oppose, and a few determined to befriend the Rev. Lecturer.

The commencement of the lecture was a signal for groans and hisses, and cries of "Turn him out." Mr. Noble was tall, active, and rather stout, and had a dark, flashing eye, and a manner fitted to awe rather than encourage an opponent. Consequently, he was but very slightly, if at all, intimidated by his stormy reception, and soon convinced his adversaries that it would be vain attempting to scare him away. He waited for a few minutes, when, a lull occurring in the hubbub, he resorted to an innocent device, which soon obtained for him a hearing. He proffered to tell them—and it was no fiction—how a poor blacksmith, in two years, saved a hundred pounds. The majority being poor, the secret of saving a hundred pounds was, in their estimation, worth learning. The smith had been a great drunkard, squandering his own and his children's earnings. He signed the Temperance pledge, and instead of being a constant frequenter of the alehouse, became a regular visitor at the bank, where his earnings and savings accumulated with marvellous rapidity.

The attention of his audience was secured. With riveted gaze, and bated breathing, and bent frame, each operative listened; spell-bound by the Lecturer's anecdotes and incidents, illustrative of the benefits of abstinence; while his fervid descriptions of the evils of drunkenness sent thrills of horror through his hearers.

"I tell you," he exclaimed with vehemence, "that nine-tenths of the crime, and two-thirds of the pauperism, and one-half of the insanity, and the great bulk of the accidents of this country result from our drinking system! I have looked carefully into this matter, have collected thousands of instances, and am prepared to prove what I say before any tribunal. Ask you for the cause of nine murders out of every ten? My answer is, our drinking system! For the cause of nine-tenths of our burglaries? My answer is, our drinking system! For the reason why nineteen out of every twenty houseless families are in the streets? My answer is, Drink! Why that maddened husband beats his helpless wife? Drink! Drink! Prisons are crowded, and

asylums rendered necessary, and workhouses furnished with their sickly tenantry, and bankruptcy lists written, and distraints made, and orphans rendered homeless—by Drink! Yonder is a monster called a mother, who has sunk even below the brute, for she has abandoned her own offspring. Investigate the history of her unnatural crime, you are carried up to—Drink! Yonder is a young man, once full of promise, whose prodigal wanderings are wringing his parents' hearts with anguish. Inquire, that which first led him astray was—Drink! A once good and holy man has, within the last six months, in this county of York, fallen from a high position into the miry depths of foul disgrace. By what did he fall?—his love of—Drink! Oh, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, shun the glass! Shun it as ye would the poison-draught! 'Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?—they that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup. At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder.' Its dominion is a degrading, ruining, cursing dominion! The dominion of a slave-master is fearfully absolute and often cruelly severe. He can fetter hands and feet, separate husband and wife, and trample with his iron heel on the tenderest ties; but he can't annihilate the *man*, nor blot out the Divine Image. Clanking cruel chains, smarting from burning wounds, hiding in the swampy marsh, with fever, sickness, and death, the poor victim of barbarous tyranny has retained his attributes of manhood and his breathings after God. But what does the slave of intoxicating habits retain? what is there in his bloated face and stammering utterance and jumbled thoughts and clouded reason and reeling soul and body, to tell of his high descent? Oh, how fallen is the drunkard! 'How is the gold become dim? how is the most fine gold changed?' With fitness might he say of his glass what Job affirms in his bitter plaint respecting the dealings with him of the hand of God: 'It hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. It hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath it removed like a tree.'

"And, fellow-countrymen! allow me to be heard on another point. I refer to our aiding and encouraging, *as a nation*, by *example, custom, and law*, the drinking system. For don't we

so encourage it? Don't we help to make drunkards? Don't we place facilities and temptations in their way? Hear me—I put it before myself after this fashion: stimulants I compare to the waters of a deep, dark river; now, if you admit the comparison, you must further allow that this river is rolling through our midst, supplied by a thousand tributaries, each charged with moral corruption, disease, madness, and death. A river that spreads malaria through its whole course, and fires the blood and brain, and blunts the sensibilities of all who drink thereof. Now, observe, this river's channel, deep and wide, we prepared; ingenuity is tasked to render access to it from every point easy and inviting. In a way, we cushion its banks and adorn them with flowers, that men may be induced to loll in its vicinity; we charm the scenery with strains of exciting music, and cover the slimy stream with forms of sensuous beauty, that the drinker may be captivated and experience a seductive delight in tarrying in this valley and shadow of death. Nay, Christian men as we are, we do more towards facilitating our brother's ruin; for don't we *carry* this liquid poison to men? Don't we place it before them? We wait not for men to seek and gain this deadly river's brink. We meet them with its waters. We cause them to cross the sorrower's path, and tempt him to snatch a ruinous respite from his grief. We thrust them on the thirsty artisan's notice as he passes to and from his dusty workshop, and then blame him if he drinks too much. The weary traveller can hardly find a place of rest and refreshment where necessity or custom does not almost force him to partake of this vaunted restorer of wasted strength. By infectious conduits we inundate with those waters the scenes of amusement; and we have those amongst us who even labour to persuade our youth that they cannot be strong and brave, be heroes, or even men, unless they surrender themselves to the dominion of this destroyer of body and soul! Aren't we, therefore, guilty, as a nation, of aiding and encouraging the drinking system? And isn't it a fearful guilt? 'Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink!—that putteth thy bottle to him and makest him drunken!'

“Young men, working men, Christian men! suffer me to put you on your guard against drink! Shun this evil custom. Tarry no longer in this path of the destroyer. Break loose from the tyranny of the enchantress that mingles the cup, drowns men's reason, and curses their souls. 'Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths, for she hath cast down

many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death."

Mr. Noble sat down. No applause followed what Mr. Ray regarded as a somewhat laboured peroration. There was profound silence. His auditory was stirred, but not with the emotion that claps and shouts and thunders. Some were ashamed, having been led to see themselves for the first time as slaves of a vile habit; whilst others burnt with ill-repressed rage, kindled by the discovery that Temperance advocates had by far too large a share of truth and reason on their side. Not a few were painfully conscious of a hard conflict between opposing inclinations; and several were busily engaged in endeavouring to muster sufficient courage and decision to renounce thenceforward all intoxicating liquors.

The Chairman asked for a vote of thanks to the Lecturer; the Lecturer begged for a hundred honest pledges. The request was openly scorned by some; thoughtfully pondered by others. Mr. Noble glanced anxiously round for some immediate and tangible fruit of his labours. Two working men—mechanics—rose, and, with every eye fixed upon them, advanced to the front of the platform. They asked to be allowed to take the pledge. They felt it was a bold step. And, in the circumstances, it was; for custom had not gone before them; rank was not with them. They were pioneers, but pioneers in a movement that has conferred incalculable good on Broadly. As they resumed their seats they were assailed with vulgar gibes by Ellis's hired ruffians. It was a moment of intense mental agitation to a gentleman who sat apart and alone. He longed there and then to share the scorn meted out to those brave men; to countenance what they had done, and show the cowards around him how little he cared for their coarse jokes and sneers. He was, moreover, convinced that it was his duty openly to avow his Temperance principles. But somehow he did not like public professions. They were targets at which he had savagely shot. This he remembered with a pang of compunction. Self-denial! Self-sacrifice! These words just then occurred to him, and stood largely out. It was as if they had been whispered by some supernatural voice. And then there followed, as if called up by them, the form of one crowned with thorns, stooping beneath the ponderous beams of a huge cross, and loaded with unmerited execrations, a hundredfold heavier than any instrument of torture.

And glory encircled this toiling outcast on his way to death, in which glory the words Self-denial! Self-sacrifice! shone with a brilliant and fascinating radiance. A new emotion trembled in his heart. A beauty which he had never before discovered drew him towards that form. He longed to imitate, in some humble degree, that quiet sufferer. To catch a reflection, however feeble, of that glory. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." And now is the time, and now is presented the opportunity, whispered the voice. He rose, stepped, with erect form and compressed lips, across the room, took the station just vacated by the two operatives, and, amid a murmur of astonishment, Mr. Ray signed the pledge, and invited the Lecturer and Chairman to Prospect House.

The effect was astounding. Abstinence was at once stamped with respectability. Scores wavered; more than one hundred and thirty at once came forward to join the Temperance ranks, amongst whom was Edward Hudson. The work was fairly begun, and to this day has continued, with, of course, very varied success.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### ARNOLD AT HOME.

Two years passed, and Arnold returned from school, deeply impressed with the power and evils of the drinking system. He had not been at Mr. Hill's many weeks when he discovered that it had insinuated itself into the establishment, and was exercising a terrible sway amongst the boys. Some of the youths were furnished, by a blind parental indulgence, with ardent spirits, whilst others obtained supplies from time to time at a road-side inn, situated about half-a-mile from the school. Frequent nightly carousals were held; but as young Haworth did not sleep at the Hall, he easily managed to excuse his absence from them.

Alas! however, even at Mr. Jones's the custom prevailed. This circumstance deeply saddened Arnold. The Reverend gentleman was a learned divine and an eloquent and popular preacher, and the young man feared he might be slain by the giant, if not careful. He had urged, faithfully, though respectfully, on his attention the merits of Temperance, and begged him to take the pledge, ostensibly as an example; *really* as a safeguard.



He had found in Mr. Jones's household, and had come to cherish a high regard for, a Miss—say Felicia Foster, a cousin of the preacher's, who was a practical abstainer, and who did not neglect to let her light shine abroad on the subject of drunkenness. "I tremble for Mr. Jones, uncle," Arnold observed one evening, when they were discussing his school life. "I fear the habit is gaining fatal hold upon him."

"Sorry to hear that, Arnold, both for his own and his children's sake, as well as the good work in which he is engaged."

"I surmise the stimulus of the glass is fast becoming a necessity."

"How unfortunate! What a foolish man! For if he allows the necessity to become like a thick chain, it will drag him from his high position into sin and sorrow and disgrace: it will be sure to do it."

"Then I think his danger is rendered much greater by what I cannot but regard as a bad custom."

"What is that, my boy?" Mr. Ray asked, lifting his eyes with pardonable pride to the open face of his nephew.

"This: the practice, at parties, of not only bringing out wines and spirits, but pressing them on the invited guests. Now Mr. Jones is a great favourite at parties; he's so full of humour, and so intelligent and agreeable; he can entertain a company as well as edify an audience—hence he's often asked out, and of course is often imbibing. Here is a great snare, uncle; I don't approve of the custom."

"Of course not, of course not. And if I were able, I would modify it; but I blame Mr. Jones quite as much as the custom; let him refuse to take anything—no friends will force him to drink."

"But he replies—for I've discussed the point with him—that they wouldn't be pleased if he didn't, and that he's in a way led into it."

"That's sheer nonsense, Arnold,—very lame reasoning indeed. I'm surprised Mr. Jones should be guilty of it; he hasn't a friend, I'll be bound, who wouldn't more admire him for refusing to drink, than love or respect him for yielding to their entreaties. Of course such entreaties are just matters of courtesy; it isn't meant that he should take his glass if he would rather not; of course it isn't, and it's therefore unmanly to throw the blame on to the hospitality of his friends. I'd make a stand at once, if I were the man, *like a man*."

"So would I, uncle; if he doesn't, he'll lose his influence: I fear, I must confess, he has partly lost it over me."

"Ah, there now!" Mr. Ray observed, with marked and earnest seriousness. "I find I must become a sort of preacher: I've to beg of you, my boy, that you won't speak slightly, nor think lightly of the pulpit on account of aught you may have observed in Mr. Jones. Some of our best men are amongst our preachers. I regard the pulpit as an invaluable institution; as accomplishing a most important mission. I hope some day to introduce you to a reverend gentleman—that Mr. Noble I've referred to in my letters, who is every inch a man and a Christian. Altogether, I'm glad you're away from Jones, and safe in what I hope you may find a happy home." Arnold thanked him.

Just then a rather tall, slender and dark-haired girl came bounding into the room, ringing out a hearty exclamation of glad surprise,—she had for several minutes been in eager search of Arnold, to pull his locks, she playfully observed, for giving her the slip. This young lady was his sister, who manifested her deep displeasure by dropping down on to the rug, resting an elbow on the young man's knee, winding one of his arms around her marble-like neck, and asking coquettishly for the subject of their very grave *tête-à-tête*.

"Subject, Julia!" Mr. Ray said, in a lively way, threading his fingers at the same time through his niece's ringlets, to give her ear a tweak,—“where's grandmother?”

"Where you left her, uncle." Mr. Ray rose and went out.

"Well, what is it all about, Arnold? This eternal Temperance?"

"It certainly so happens," he replied, toying with his sister's hand, "that we have been chatting about Temperance. But, Julia, why speak in this way? Are you already tired of Temperance?"

"No, Arnold."

"What, then, is the matter? What, then, has caused this altered tone?"

"To be brief and pointed, this: I see it will bring you trouble."

"How—why?"

"Do you know aunt Ray hates you because of your Temperance?"

"I was aware I was no favourite with her, but didn't suppose the feeling was so strong."

"But it is; I thought it best to let you know, without any mincing."

"I wonder why she so objects to my being an abstainer! It doesn't——"

"You wonder! Can't you guess? Haven't you done?"

"No."

"Then I'll inform you: she declares you are doing it to please your uncle, and gain possession, in the end, of his money; and very hard things she says of you."

"It's false, Julia, and unkind; if uncle hadn't had a penny I'd have taken the pledge; and if he were to lose all to-morrow I'd keep it, God helping me."

"I trust you would, Arnold, and I shall be much mistaken if aunt Ray doesn't live to wish that Pearson had taken the pledge."

"Pearson's a fast young man, sister."

"He is; and so is that companion of his, Harry Smirk. And have they told you that cousin Maud is engaged to Harry?"

"No! Surely she's not!"

"It is a fact, my lad; aunt told me first, and Maud and Pearson confirmed it this morning."

"I'm very, very sorry to hear you say that," Arnold observed, thoughtfully. "She's a nice girl; but farewell happiness if she should marry Smirk!"

"She is; and more, she's clever. But Maud shares her mother's scorn of Temperance; she actually said to me this morning, that she'd rather have a husband who drank to excess than one who didn't drink at all. She looks on it as manly to take a glass and smoke a cigar. You, and such as you, are milksops in her estimation; we exchanged sharp words on the subject."

"Does uncle Rowland know?"

"Yes."

"And grandmother?"

"Yes."

"What do they say?"

"Nothing particular."

"Won't uncle remonstrate, think you?"

"I don't expect he will; he appears to have other matters to engage his thoughts. Has it ever appeared to you, Arnold, that he seems unhappy?"

"No."

"He appears so to me; he's often absent in his manner, and melancholy; and, besides, he goes away a great deal, as if for a change; I can't read him, nor can his mother; she asked me one day if I could imagine what ailed him; he's kind to us, and all that, but there is something, I'm positive, underneath the surface that isn't pleasant: those long absences puzzle us most. What does aunt Ray say, do you suppose? How does she account for them?"

"Says he goes away to drink, perhaps."

"Just that."

"It is mean, Julia, just like her, and just like thousands besides," Arnold replied, with a touch of warmth. "When the reason of an action isn't obvious, people will suggest one that is odious."

"Then *really* you don't believe it is so?"

"I'm sure it isn't so; it cannot be; uncle is too straightforward and open for such duplicity: is there aught about him, when he returns, that warrants the supposition that he's been spreeing?"

"Nothing, except his extreme depression and misery."

"Oh, depression of itself isn't proof sufficient; *I'm* sometimes depressed, and I don't take intoxicating beverages; he may have business, of which we have no conception, by which he is worried; I've full, unshaken, and I will add, what appears to me unshakable, confidence in uncle. How kind of him to ask us and his mother to come and live with him, and to treat us as he does!"

"Understand me, Arnold, I'm not in anything *blaming* uncle, I'm only trying to read and decipher him."

"Aren't you suspecting him?"

"Nonsense, silly boy!" This disclaimer of suspicion was accompanied by a gentle chuck, which Arnold laughingly repaid in kind.

Footsteps were just then audible, which were followed by Mr. Rowland and his mother, the latter a somewhat stately person, between sixty and seventy.

"Oh! Arnold," the former observed, throwing himself with a careless air on to a couch, "I've omitted to inform you that Hudson and his wife particularly request you to walk up some day as far as the Three Elms, and sit an hour with them. You'll be pleased with their new home."

"Thank you, uncle, I'll do so; I remember the *old* house well."

"Doubtless you do," Mr. Rowland replied. "Ah! this much abused Temperance has done something for Ned, at any rate; nobody can deny that."

"Your uncle has done more, Arnold, I guess," Mrs. Ray observed.

"How you talk, grandmother! I have done little more than consent to stand security for the rent; my share of the crime of Hudson's reformation is by no means so considerable as some would-be-thought good people imagine and say; certainly, if they transport him for life on account of it, they ought not to send me for more than half the term."

"Is his leg all right, uncle?"

"It is as near that mark, I fear, as ever it will be. Hallo! yonder's his wife, I declare!"

A ringing voice sounded from the kitchen. The owner was requested to walk into the room; which owner proved to be Mrs. Hudson, prim, sprightly, and handsome. Of course she seized Arnold's hand, and in a way assailed him with a hot discharge of congratulations and compliments. She was in a very loquacious mood, and behaved with more assurance than Mrs. Ray relished, who had some strong and sharply-defined notions on the subject of class distinctions and class deportment. Rowland knew it, and rather liked to charge down on them, something after the style of a heavy dragoon. Isn't he altered, Mrs. Hudson? And wouldn't he be able to hold a plough in a brave way, if the horses didn't pull it? And doesn't he bid fair to be a small Samson? were amongst the questions which Mr. Ray rattled out, rather with the view of enabling the good woman to feel at ease in his mother's somewhat damping presence, than that of eliciting definite answers.

"He's all ye think him, no doubt, Mr. Rowland, and much more," she observed, running her eye fondly over the several points presented by his personal appearance. "A charming lad, as I've always said he was, from my first knowing him. And do you hold to your Temperance, true as a milestone to its tale, Arnold?"

"I hope I do, Mrs. Hudson."

"Ah, that's well," she replied, casting a side-glance at Mrs. Ray, who was exercising her rocking-chair rather vigorously. "That's well. It's done great things for Broadly since ye left us; we're hundreds strong now."

"And it's not done a little for you, Mrs. Hudson," Rowland put in, speaking in a cheerful tone.

"It an' friends. It an' friends, Arnold. We've now, thank God, three cows, an' a horse, an' pigs, an' sheep, an' poultry, an' other property, for which I——"

"And as comfortable a home as one need wish for," Mr. Ray added.

"I wish you health to enjoy it, Martha," Mrs. Ray said, "and I'm sure Mister Arnold does." He assured her he did.

"I was going to ask him to come up an' take a cup of tea with us, ma'am, which I should make with all my heart, an' esteem a great favour."

In reply to this somewhat ambiguous intimation, Mrs. Ray observed that Arnold would doubtless walk up, but in regard to tea, Mrs. Hudson was, of course, to excuse her grandson.

"Oh, he'll come, I think," Mr. Rowland threw carelessly in, rising as he spoke.

He went to his own room, and in a few minutes the carrier's wife was summoned to join him there.

Authors who write mainly for amusement, have a trick of suppressing dialogue and incident, when such suppression may seem calculated to sustain the interest of their narrative. The artifice is allowable, and sometimes very useful. Now, although the writer of these pages does not seek to entertain merely, or chiefly, it does seem to him advisable to omit here one portion of the conversation which that evening took place between Mr. Ray and his friend Mrs. Hudson. Such omission is a trick only. So far as he is informed, not one syllable was uttered that the most fastidious reader could in fairness object to.

"The remuneration you propose would be perfectly satisfactory, Mr. Ray," Martha Hudson observed, when they had conversed closely and earnestly for half an hour at least. "Indeed it would be more than enough; but I fear we should be unable to keep the thing so perfect a secret as you wish. Secrets in these villages are like daylight—they'll somehow get through very small chinks."

"The folks would try hard to guess, I don't doubt, and might succeed, for by chance a cripple may catch a hare. But I can't help thinking that if we were to take care and give our tongues no tether on the subject, they'd be like blind men guessing at colours. The chances would be against them. You say nought of Ned,—would he be manageable?"

"I hope so. Well paid, he'd make small trouble of knowing aught. Tom 'd be harder to work. He's possessed of a sharp eye, and a fine ear, and a restless, prying mind. Of course we should have to do with him as is done with fidgeting horses, watch and gird him well."

"Does Tom hold to his abstinence?"

"Ay, as to his skin. He's a good, obedient lad, an', kept sober, will grow up every inch a man, God helping him."

"Be sure and prevent the formation of a taste for intoxicating drinks. That taste isn't born with us, it's acquired; and acquired, alas! in numberless instances, in youth. Whilst under the mother's care, I fear the majority of drunkards are made."

"I believe you, Mr. Ray. An early liking, which must be created to exist, is with the greatest difficulty conquered. I fear Ned hasn't yet overcome his fondness for ale. The hankering abides with him yet,—in abated force, it is true, but yet strong enough to trouble and even torment him."

"I pray he may not act like a dog that returns to its vomit."

"So do I, Mr. Rowland. But I'm not without my fears. Ellis's is, at times, a sore temptation. He's hard fighting to resist it. I've heard him say, many a time, that if it wasn't for such places, his victory over his drinking habits would be easy and complete."

"I know from experience, Mrs. Hudson, that they render the struggle all the more severe. And it must be so—cannot be otherwise. They are direct enticements to drink. They render it not merely very easy, but convenient pleasant. They are what a protruding purse is to a pickpocket; a chance to cheat to a dishonest tradesman. They excite, or at any rate quicken, desire. You keep him from them by all means, out of the sweep of their influence, or woe be to both of you! It's strange such pitfalls are allowed in a Christian country, and by a people who profess to be anxious that all men should walk safely."

"This matter we've been talking over we'll let alone for a few months, if you please, and in the meanwhile think it well over. I'm sorry I cannot consult Arnold, for, though young, he has a singularly sound judgment."

No further allusion was made to the subject, nor to Temperance, that evening, for which reason we will close this chapter.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

## A FAMILY CONFERENCE.

In about a week, I believe—I'm not *sure* about it—a conversation took place at Rook Cottage on Temperance and other points, of which it is desirable some account should be given. The writer cannot describe the room in which it was held, nor the dress and behaviour of those who conducted it. The reason is, that the authority he now quotes has left no record of these very secondary matters. There were present Mr. Thompson Ray, Mrs. Thompson Ray, and Maud. The hour was six, P.M. The month, January. The evening, cold and dark. The following is the purport—faithfully, though not verbally, given—of what passed :—

"You ought to allow her a thousand pounds, at least." This had reference to Maud.

"I tell you, my dear, I cannot," Mr. Thompson replied.

"I don't understand cannot in such a connection."

"But I do, Mrs. T. The concern won't yield it—can't—with-out injury. Money is blood in a business, and if you draw out too often, why, it will die of exhaustion. *Must* do so. Besides, I'm not convinced that I ought to abstract it, even if I could do so safely."

"What do you mean, Thompson?"

"This: that I don't look on it as my duty to assist Harry Smirk to that extent. If he hasn't money enough of his own to marry with, then let him wait a little."

"You're unreasonable. How can you expect them to start off as they ought to, without help from you? It's shameful!" No doubt Mrs. Thompson tossed her head significantly, and fumed a great deal.

"My dear," her husband replied, "as to the manner of their starting off, I've no clearly-defined notions. But as you've dragged me right into the heart of this business, I'll make you a present of a bit of my mind. I heartily wish and pray—in a certain irreverent way—that they may never start off at all as husband and wife. God forbid, Emma, that we should throw our daughter away."

The memoranda from which the writer quotes state that Maud here burst into tears,—metaphorically, of course,—and that Mrs. Ray stared at her husband as she might have done



had he been just then the subject of some strange physical transformation.

"Throw her away! What can you mean? Are you, at the eleventh hour, going to oppose the match? Your reason must have left you, Thompson. What will our friends and the public—everybody—think and say?"

"I can't afford to inquire personally, my dear, of every member of the rather numerous family of man. But if I could, and if I found that the majority were disposed to say very hard things about and against me, I believe I shouldn't care a nip. The fact is this, Emma, Harry Smirk is a confirmed drunkard. He's rushing headlong to ruin."

"Are you rushing to ruin?" Mrs. Ray asked, with scornful contempt.

"I'll not deny that I'm on the road, my dear."

"Then you'd better become a milksop, like Arnold and the rest of 'em, and take the pledge, and turn against you the laugh of all respectable people."

"If I saw any likelihood of my honouring the pledge I'd take it to-night. But I don't. I'm wedded to the glass. It's a necessity. I should die of depression if I didn't drink, and I'm ruined if I go on drinking. So mine is a pretty little predicament. What I'm to do I can't imagine."

"But I can. You are to let us have some money, and talk sense. That's what you're to do. We'll have no Temperance here. Such weathercocks! . Who'll think aught of you if you adopt every folly?"

"Yes, it's a great folly, Emma, is Temperance, isn't it? Has done immense mischief in Broadly, hasn't it? You shall judge, if you will be kind enough to condescend to such a mental exercise. Gilbert was telling me——"

"Another rattlebrain, who's been slandering Harry Smirk!"

"Well, let that pass. I can believe Gilbert as well as most men, and he declares that there are forty families now in this village whom Temperance has raised from poverty and filth and misery to plenty and cleanliness and comfort. Is that aught?"

"Not much, for I'll be bound they're stuck full of pride and impertinence. They're for ever boasting at their meetings what they've saved and done, and what they were and have become. When do you find respectable people bawling out to all around, *that they can* pay their rent and turn out their wives and

children well clothed, and hold up their heads, owing no man aught? It's a nuisance, and ought to be stopped."

"I wish there were more nuisances of the sort, my dear. I wish your husband could so boast," Mr. Ray observed, sarcastically.

"Of course he can. But if he does, he'll deserve lodging in the lock-up. And then there's poor Ellis. You say nought of him. How they've banded to ruin the inoffensive man! Nor of Wharton, of the Dog and Gun. He's had to sell up and leave. Look at *both* sides of the picture, Mr. Ray. You wouldn't like your family reduced to poverty."

"Perhaps not. But shouldn't I deserve it if I lived by ruining people?"

"If you *will* talk in that foolish way, I'll cease. It's just nonsense, arrant nonsense. Do you promise Maud this money, because the marriage is hanging on it?"

"Then let it hang. I couldn't fulfil if I did."

"Why, it's a shame—a great shame—a shame that burns to the firm's disgrace, considering what you've done for it!—that's my mind."

"The firm has done as much for me as I've done for it. They're yet sore about that hundred pounds Pearson hasn't accounted for. Oh, Emma! I'm distressed almost beyond endurance about that lad; we're ruining him as sure as we let him go on in his present course. I'd give every halfpenny we have if he were like Arnold."

"And I'd whip him until he hadn't a sound inch of flesh on his bones if he were. I'm aware of his failings, but I'd rather—much rather—have his faults than his cousin's weaknesses and whims, if he *must* have either."

"Do you know he didn't put in an appearance from Throng until three o'clock this morning?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"And did you reprimand him?"

"I told him it was very foolish, and even wrong. I trust he'll not repeat it."

"I'll tell you what I believe: I believe if he doesn't become an abstainer he'll become a convict, if not something worse. There's no middle course. I see it as clearly as I now see my hand. It has been a world of trouble to me to-day."

"I guessed you'd something disagreeable in your head, you've been so gloomy and morose. I'm glad to learn it's nothing

more real than this airy fancy. I've no fears. When Pearson has lived a few more years, and gained a little more experience, he'll forsake his frolics and become a man of gravity and honour. Don't restrain him so much. I don't like those nineteen-year-old sages and philosophers. They're no good, and certainly, no beauties. Behind their mild, demure faces they hide no end of mean tricks. My doctrine is, let lads *be* lads, and when they've reached manhood, then expect them to be men, and if properly dealt with they'll not disappoint you."

"But, as is the boy, so is the man, Emma."

"Tut! that's a maxim invented and driven into people by schoolmasters, to encourage the trade. Natural enough that they should do so; but I've known lots of instances that have proved just the contrary. And Pearson's will be another added to the number. So have a heart, and confer on your daughter a dowry."

That daughter, it appears, here took up and warmly and eloquently advocated her own cause and that of her lover; but whether Mr. Ray promised to make her a present, or positively refused to do so, we cannot ascertain. The husband persistently reiterated his inability to grant them their request; and his wife stanchly adhered to the doctrine that he could and ought to help them.

Mr. Thompson Ray became an altered man. We happen to know that Mrs. Thompson noted it, anxiously conjecturing as to its cause. In the counting-house he was often melancholy, at the family board, taciturn. Although he had spoken in the way recorded of Temperance, practically, he showed no leanings to abstinence. Sometimes he would go without his accustomed glass, it is true; but at other times he would take more than had been his wont. He behaved like one, now feebly attempting to wean himself from what he believes is an evil, and may prove a curse; and now driven to partake of it by an uncontrollable longing, rendered all the more desperate by the abortive restraint beneath which it has chafed and fumed. It was clear to all who observed him that Mr. Thompson Ray was very unhappy.

And it was equally clear to all who observed his wife, that *she* was very busy. Busy she was with Maud and Harry Smirk and Pearson. With the young surgeon she was often closeted, and if we liked to assume the novelist's prerogative, and exercise the same, we should probably describe them as conversing in

whispered words, with serious countenance and uplifted finger and mysterious air. But as our informant never witnessed one of those interviews, we cannot affirm aught as to the way in which they were really conducted.

Harry and Maud were married in March, and went to reside at Throng, where the young surgeon commenced what might have been worked up into a good practice. Alas! and again alas!

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## CHAPTER IX.

### OUR GRAND NATIONAL CUSTOM, AND HOW IT WORKS.

In April, James and Gilbert Ray had a long interview at Prospect House with their brother Rowland. It related to business and the firm. The two brothers were anxious and despondent. They were straitened for capital, and lacked a demand for their goods. Thompson neglected business; his wife was extravagant.

They had come with a proposal—would he make Arnold a partner, “and throw a handsome share into the concern?” It so happened that Mr. Ray had thought of something of the sort; and as it was impossible for Arnold to be inactive, he was of opinion that it would be best for him to begin at once to make himself acquainted with the business. Mr. Ray’s nephew heartily concurred in the suggestion of his uncle. He thus writes:—

“When the offer of a partnership was made to me I was pining for employment. I was tired of dividing my time between Prospect House and Mrs. Hudson’s and my Temperance friends in Broadly and Throng. I yearned to live for a purpose; aspired to be an industrious, useful, prosperous man. The offer had only one drawback: I should be thrown into close contact with those from whom I should be likely to differ widely on the subject of Temperance.

“This difficulty, however, I found had been much magnified and distorted. Uncle Gilbert was a practical abstainer. Uncle James had been so deeply impressed with the evils of drinking, that he now partook very slightly. Uncle Thompson was most respectful, even deferential, and often commended me for abiding firmly by my principles; whilst Pearson shunned the subject on which he was aware I had strong convictions, and

appeared thankful for my forbearance in regard to his irregularities of conduct.

"Altogether, that summer glided away very pleasantly, and autumn found me at home in the business, somewhat of a favourite at Prospect House, and not unpopular amongst many parties in Broadly.

"In October, my heart was deeply pained and saddened. It was Saturday evening, and at or near the door of the Robin Hood I beheld a sight which pierced it like a knife. I had halted, for it was dark, and was listening to the loud roar of mingled voices that proceeded from Ellis's large and disorderly company, and musing on the probability that starving children's bread and weeping women's home-comforts were being there sacrificed by cruel fathers and faithless husbands, when a boy attracted my attention. He was weeping bitterly. I knew—or supposed I knew—the lad, and was just opening my lips to speak to him, when a figure came staggering out, which he seized by the arm and addressed by name, entreating it to go home without delay. He was shaken off with an oath. He renewed, with commendable determination, his attempt to prevent the man's return into the house. But in vain. I took charge of the lad, and we went on our way.

"I was much, very much, grieved—even indignant. During the whole of Sunday, what I had seen violently disturbed my peace. On the Monday, after returning from the mill, Julia and I walked up to the Three Elms. We found Mrs. Hudson and her children grouped round the fire, silent and sad. It was indeed a scene of mourning. It was clear some calamity had befallen them, the woe of which was felt in some measure by all. We received a kind welcome from the poor woman; but it was scarcely uttered when the faculty of speech was overpowered, borne down by a tide of irrepressible emotion.

"‘Is it true, Mrs. Hudson?’ I asked, when we were seated. She sighed heavily, ‘Yes,’ staring at the fire with a look of ominous desperation.

"‘I’m very, very sorry,’ Julia replied.

"‘Thank you,’ was her short answer.

"I saw that some dark purpose was in occupation of her thoughts, so I observed, in a way meant to be cheering, and with the determination to help the good woman in her trial, for the sake of the children as well as herself:—

"‘Now, Mrs. Hudson, we must make the best of this sad

business. We must indeed. Don't lose heart in this fashion, and give all up for lost.'

"All *is* lost, sir. The vessel has struck, an' is falling to pieces. It's *no* use!"

"I tell you it *may* be of use, *must* be, to try and make the best of it. How has it happened? Not a week ago I believed him firm as a rock.'

"Ellis had a shooting-match on Saturday. Always something to attract custom. Hudson went, without any intention of breaking, I believe. But, once amongst his old companions, the temptation was too strong. Oh, sir! a fearful account will surely be demanded of many of those who keep such places. Hadn't it been for such haunts, I don't doubt I could have kept him all right. Why are they permitted? Oh! what a "woe" will yet be his who gives his neighbour drink, who puts his bottle to him, an' makes him drunken!"

"During this time she didn't turn her gaze for an instant from the bright fire glowing in the clean grate.

"Let us do our best: keep a brave heart.'

"I felt it was desirable to do so, and that it would be difficult. I didn't doubt Edward Hudson would be worse than ever.

"I acquainted uncle Rowland with the sad calamity. The instant I announced the fact of Hudson's relapse, he startled and astonished me by suddenly and energetically exclaiming,—

"Thank God! What a fortunate circumstance; oh, what a fortunate circumstance!" observing, probably, my surprise, he added hurriedly, as if in haste to erase some false impression,—

"Stay, Arnold, don't misunderstand me; I'm not glad that Ned has broken—oh! dear no! But how fortunate! Poor Martha! isn't she much distressed?"

"Very much, uncle.'

"Ah, my lad," he went on, thinking aloud rather than addressing his observations to me, 'this vexatious case of falling away shows that I've been in the wrong; that I've been hugging fondly a great error: I've supposed that improved homes, next to convictions, were, in the main, sufficient for the reclamation of drunkards. I've dwelt largely, and I fear Mrs. Hudson will have thought with some attempt at eloquence, on the power of a happy home to recover and hold a drunken husband. Now see how mistaken I've been; she has improved her home astonishingly—a brighter fire, a cleaner hearth, tidier children, a cosier kitchen, sweeter, more inviting airs of domestic order, comfort,

happiness, I've never seen, than those with which that poor disappointed woman has managed to furnish her home. To me it was more charming than a palace, as I've sat there for long hours during this last winter's evenings, and listened to the howling wind without, and looked at the cleanliness and comfort within, and yielded to the bewitching influence of the crickets' chirp, and the children's prattle, and the faithful wife's loving smiles and winning arts,—I've positively envied Hudson, feeling sure that he *must* be a really contented and happy man; and yet look at it. All has been insufficient to keep him sober and steady, for this reason, that the public-house has been pulling so strongly, of course in a contrary direction; this has dragged him, so to speak, from his hearth. Having yet a lingering taste for the noise and fumes and society of the ale-bench, he has shown himself unable to resist the temptation. I'm led to ask, Arnold, what use is it our labouring to save men, so long as those haunts are permitted to allure them to their destruction? That they *are* so permitted by public opinion seems strange to me now. It *once* didn't, but *now* it does; we speak sometimes of life as a stream—don't we, my boy?—down which we are floating. And we deprecate being wrecked, don't we? Plain, easy, safe sailing appears to be what we wish for ourselves and others, doesn't it? Aren't our teachers of religion encouraged and supported because they show men how they may voyage safely? And much of our literature has this object professedly. Take care, they say, of that rock; don't venture too near that sand-bank. See! there is a cataract, keep clear of it. Yonder a shallow, have a care, or you are stranded. All right enough—not a word to say against it. But what does custom allow? What does it encourage? More: what does it defend? What does it offer facilities for? Why, for the forming of deep whirlpools, down which shrieking thousands are every year swept and engulfed. The very society that manifests such active concern for men's safety and welfare does this. Our public-houses just answer to whirlpools. They draw, they bewilder, they destroy. And yet we say, Oh, don't meddle with them, don't prohibit men farming them. You would restrain human freedom if you were to do so. They are increasing yearly; they so cover many parts of the broad stream, that it is positively hazardous for young or inexperienced people to venture out at all. And yet our cry is, Don't interfere. We see now a father drawn into irretrievable ruin, and a family thrown helpless

on to the stream ; and now a young man of remarkable promise, or a young wife deemed chaste and faithful, sucked into the seething vortex, and for ever lost to virtue, hope, and happiness. We say, What a pity ! Subscribe money, it may be, for the destitute ; build asylums for them ; appoint ministers to warn back the more adventurous, employ means, adopt stratagems, to keep our young people out of the power of the voracious destroyers. And yet our cry is, Let them alone ; allow, help them to multiply ; keep out of the circuit of their influence, but don't try to contract that circuit by so much as an inch, or to lessen that influence by so much as a fraction. I say it's inconsistent, it's absurd, and the sooner we've a little plain speaking on the point the better it will be for our reputation as Christian and professedly wise men.'

"Hudson's relapse was quite a topic with us. Grandmother hoped it would cool our zeal in the Temperance cause. Not that she disapproved of sobriety. That was right enough in its place ; but it was folly, a sheer waste of time and words and money, endeavouring to reform poor, low people. She didn't see why we should take upon ourselves the troubles of other people.

"For three weeks Ned gave himself up to the dominion of the glass. He even sank to a lower point than he had ever before reached. Neglected his work, his family, his home. It was indeed the sow returning to her wallowing in the mire.

"We assisted Mrs. Hudson gladly. And she remained faithful to her pledge. But in spite of all her efforts she grew poorer. She felt herself, she declared, gliding back into the old pit of poverty and misery and filth.

"Her husband, drinking harder than ever, resorted to more reckless and desperate artifices to obtain money for ale and spirits than he had before attempted. He pawned and borrowed, begged and even stole. The thirsty demon of drunkenness goaded him on from indiscretions to arrant follies, and from arrant follies to crime after crime of deep and deepening stains. At length the end came ; but it was, alas ! blackened by a deed which we trust, for the sake of the credit of human nature, has few parallels. It occurred in the evening of the twenty-third of December.

"Mrs. Hudson determined, for the sake of her children, to make their home as inviting and comfortable as practicable during the approaching Christmas, had worked and economized



and schemed to the utmost of her over-tasked ability. She had managed to collect together for this purpose some ten or twelve shillings, and on the day in question despatched Tom, with two of the smaller children, in high glee to lay out the sum in such groceries as, in the judgment of children, are essential to the existence of thoroughly orthodox Christmas cakes, pies, and puddings.

"Owing to an extra pressure of business at the shop, it was quite dark before the children were fairly on their way home. They trudged along in great spirits, for Tom was conscious of having made such purchases as would satisfy, if not delight, his mother; and his younger brother and little sister were much elated with presents they had received, especially the latter, who clutched a new pair of tiny shoes with all the eagerness of a miser's grasp, for they were valuable to her as the treasures of a bank. Tom was a courageous, yet shrewd and cautious, boy, and did not much like being out in that lonely lane, with his well-stored basket, as he thought it, and his helpless, prattling charge. He tugged and toiled right bravely, and by stimulating chat with his brother and sister, succeeded in inducing them to keep up in walking at the highest point of their small strength. When half the journey was accomplished, and they were entering on a footpath that ran parallel with a thick hedge, Tom's heart indulged in a leap, and his heavy basket received a nervous hitch. The cause was the discovery of a dark figure on the opposite side of the fence. The lad trembled for his mother's groceries, and their Christmas cake and pudding. The figure—I've heard Tom relate the incident twenty times at least—moved on in a crouching attitude, as if bent on mischief. The poor fellow owns to having felt a touch excited and apprehensive. They came to an opening in the hedge. There stood the figure! It smote the children with sudden terror. They crept close to their eldest brother, and held fast his disengaged hand. He declares that at that moment there throbbed within him the instincts of brother, parent, and protector. The figure stepped on to the footpath and peered down at the brave boy. It demanded his money. Of course he had none. Then his basket. Of course he refused to surrender. A heavy threat was tried, but without effect. It was then savagely seized, Tom energetically resisting the superior strength of his opponent. The lad was next grasped by the arm and thrown violently down, the children causing the still air to ring with their piteous

cries. Stung into a fury, he challenged the robber by name, pronouncing that of his own father, and rushed at him, resolved to recover his basket. The hardened wretch was in the act of snatching the shoes from his terrified and almost unconscious child. It was, however, in vain; for flinging Tom from him with an oath, he slipped through the hedge and disappeared."

Now, dear reader, don't pooh, pooh! and talk of stuff and nonsense! You have here what once actually occurred, to the merest detail. Yes, this husband and father took his son's basket and his child's present and sold them for drink! In the evening of December the twenty-third, the tiny shoes, slightly scratched by the little owner in its eagerness to retain possession of them, were disposed of in the Robin Hood for the sum of one shilling, which coin was in five minutes ringing in the landlord's till. Yes, this was done, and yet the floor didn't open to swallow up these traffickers in blood, nor did the roof fall with one tremendous crash, smashing and burying the altar, with its thrice-guilty priest, where homes and families were daily and nightly sacrificed! Similar things take place amongst us daily, which lead us to exclaim sometimes, 'O Lord! how long? how long?' Oftentimes we are ready to ask, in presence of such blood-red iniquity, 'Is there a God that judgeth in the earth? Who is ever about, at all times nigh, hearing the cries of the wronged and oppressed?' Verily there is! That night there came down from His righteous Throne a terrible judgment. It moaned in the rising wind long before the noisy revellers left their haunt. It was as if it blackened the sky, for a darkness gathered like unto the sombre and wide-sweeping wings of some Egyptian curse. As the murderer of Peace and Hope and Happiness staggered from the scene of his guilty orgies, this judgment met him in the rushes of the blinding blast, and lay in wait for him in the drifts of the driving snow. It was behind and before, above and beneath him, confusing each sense, baffling each effort, stiffening each limb, freezing the poisoned stream of life, and making an aspen-leaf of every fibre of the body and power of the soul in the fearful triumph and riot of its terrible might. Maybe the drunkard's fancy saw in the darkness a once bright and happy home; and maybe he longed, as never before he had longed, again to bask in its rosy light. Perhaps he wept, perhaps he prayed, as vainly he struggled with the all but omnipotent retribution his sins had provoked. But no relenting knew the terrible judgment of Heaven. He had

scorned children's tears ; steeled himself against a faithful wife's loving smiles ; on swept the pitiless blast, higher and higher grew the smothering drift. He had left a household shepherdless. And now, no guiding-star, no friendly landmark, could he find. He had exposed to want and cold those whom it was his duty to feed and shield. Bitter and more bitter he felt the icy wind. He had heaped miseries on the heads of the helpless and innocent. *His* way was walled up with inaccessible heights of snow. Perhaps he madly struggled against the formidable barrier, or quickly succumbed to the giant that assailed him in the storm. Or, with a curse on life, and wild maniac thoughts of death, met by inches of torture his dreadful fate. However it may have been, this *we do* know, that three days after this tempestuous night the corpse of Edward Hudson was found on a wide waste of moor, deeply embedded in the frozen snow, every atom of the rigid form wearing the impress of stern, inexorable death. 'This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side !'

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## CHAPTER X.

### ARNOLD AND JULIA.

"My uncle," Arnold continues, "resolved that Mrs. Hudson should remain on the farm if practicable ; we gladly hoped she would be able to work it. Tom was a strong, stanch, steady lad, full of promise, as a bursting rose-bud is of beauty ; he would do, we were sure, not less work than his father had done, and we had much more confidence in him.

"The interest uncle Rowland felt and manifested in the widow's family accounted, to my full satisfaction, for his frequent visits and their growing intimacy. He was often up at the farm, and she was often down at Prospect House ; his mother was, however, a little suspicious and fearful. There were grounds, in her opinion, for prejudicial reports, which I pooh-poohed with elaborate contempt ; and when grandmother honoured me with her confidence, I told her frankly that I was astonished she could think aught in the least unfavourable of her son. I was right : he was honour itself.

"That spring my spirit groaned beneath a heavy trial. I was strongly attached to my sister Julia, and she to me; she was beautiful, modest, intelligent, and affectionate. We shared each other's secrets, joys, and sorrows.

"I had returned from the mill and found her alone, uncle and grandmother being at Mr. Smirk's, when I saw clearly that something was on her mind, gnawing at her peace. I had for several days observed her growing unhappiness, and deeming that a favourable opportunity, resolved to get at a knowledge of its cause.

"'What's amiss, Julia?' I observed, assuming a careless air, as we sat together at tea. 'You've not been yourself for several days.'

"'How d'you know that, brother?' she rejoined, trying to be a little sprightly.

"'How could I *not* know it? It's written on your face!'

"'Well, then, since I can't deceive you, Arnold, I'll be candid. I'm in a state of torturing indecision.'

"'Torturing indecision!' I feared the very thing I had dreaded was upon me. 'What are you undecided about?'

"'The great event in a woman's life has befallen me!' I had to stifle a rising groan. 'For days I've longed to break the subject to you, for the sake of your counsel, but couldn't do it, because I was sure it would pain your heart.'

"'What is it, Julia? Don't torture me.'

"'I've received an offer.'

"'I expressed no surprise, being in a way prepared for the disagreeable intelligence, for it was intensely disagreeable. I had no wish to part with her; on the contrary, I felt strongly opposed to such a thing.

"'Well,' I observed—to her I appeared both sorry and serious—'it is a matter that should be well weighed, Julia, this taking a husband. Have you weighed it?'

"'I'm doing so. But you don't ask whence this offer has come, Arnold.'

"'I've not, and would rather you didn't inform me just now, for I don't wish what I may say to suffer the disadvantage of being regarded as personal, Julia. Has he a good character, and is he a tried young man?'

"'Pretty fair, I hope.'

"'I don't like that, dear, it's not enough.'

"'Why, you can't find a *perfect* young man. Are you perfect, Arnold?'

“‘No, sister: but *do* regard character as of first moment. I place it before money, rank, or genius; for, without it, what are these? I fear many young people wholly overlook it, and those who do, measure by a very low standard. The fact that a gentleman has made them an offer, shown for them a little partiality, is sufficient to blind them to many faults.’

“‘All don’t view this matter as you do. However virtuous one may be, there must be something besides, or the door of good society will remain closed. This doctrine is all very well in books and on platforms, brother, but in *real* life, it is just nowhere. The very writers and lecturers who expound and enforce it quietly and wholly ignore it in actual intercourse. This being the case, I can’t but think, Arnold, that you carry your doctrine too far; we have to do with the world as we find it, not as we would like it to be.’

“‘But aren’t you putting aside the Bible, my dear? How about its teachings, and——’

“‘Oh, well, as to that—he promises, however, to be as steady and as good as you like.’

“‘I place a small value on ante-marriage vows, Julia; they are honeyed baits, gilded snares, as substantial and productive ordinarily as a shadow. Who promises so fairly, sister?’

“‘One whom I fear you will look on with no friendly eye.’

“‘Well, name.’

“‘Edward Yates.’

“‘For a moment I was dumb—astonishment paralyzed the power of speech. Yates was no favourite of mine, and I said to myself, ‘He must know it.’ What assurance, therefore, to propose to her!

“‘Where is Yates?’ I asked, for I hadn’t seen him for two years, at least.

“‘At Throng.’

“‘What doing?—In any business?’

“‘No.’

“‘Where have you met?’ I was sure they must have met.

“‘At cousin Smirk’s.’

“I had to force back a rising feeling of alarm. For the first time I saw the risks she had been running in visiting at cousin Maud’s. They yawned before me, like wide openings leading down into fathomless depths of darkness.

“‘Sister,’ I remarked, with stern gravity, ‘Edward Yates *was*—I’ll not do him an injustice knowingly—a great drinker.

As regards intemperance, and intemperate people, you know my views. Good *cannot* come of drunkenness, whether its victim be merchant or mechanic, peer or peasant, pauper or retired gentleman. It's the curse of curses—the author of the large bulk of our social misery. Oh, Julia! if you value your happiness in this world, if you would have aught of domestic bliss, if you wouldn't weep your way to the grave and leave your children an inheritance of untold woe, marry a sober man. Wedded to a drunkard, you are doomed to days of misery and nights of anguish. It *cannot* be otherwise. You may think me a wild, bigoted declaimer; I may be such, but I cannot help thus believing and speaking.'

“Well, Arnold, I've not accepted the offer; I can refuse him; nevertheless, I *do* think you are a trifle—and more than a trifle—one-sided in your views.'

“I wish, for your sake, I could think so, Julia. But I cannot. How can it be otherwise than according to what I say? Nay, I believe the evils and horrors and dangers of drunkenness have hitherto been painted in colours much too faint. With an intemperate husband, what could you do?—how live? you never would be safe. Ever in danger of bankruptcy, or fire, or disgrace. Prepared for no emergency. Your partner a counsellor never to be depended upon for a word of wise advice! A helper never to be trusted in the hour of need! A companion who would leave you to sit all alone through long, weary nights, whilst he revelled with inhuman comrades in dens of infamy. A father who would return from absences, deplored by none of his children, only to curse them with brandy-flavoured oaths, or well-nigh smother them with poisoning caresses, prompted rather by the delirium of intoxication than the yearning of true affection. I should, indeed, look on that as a sad day, Julia, that saw you married to a drunkard, though he could place you in a mansion, roll you in a chariot, and confer on you the highest title in the realm. Sober poverty, if need be, sooner than—'

“‘I'm sure, Arnold, Mr. Yates would have small cause for admiring your charity if he heard you. Aren't you assuming too much? I believe he is very steady, and is contemplating a practical, though perhaps quiet, abstinence from intoxicating beverages.'

“‘Glad to hear that, Julia. Nevertheless, I'm not sorry that I've spoken out. I don't say, refuse his offer. I don't say, accept it. If your heart is his, and you have confidence in him,

you will give to the affair serious consideration. But whatever you do, or do not, act cautiously. I bear him no grudge. God forbid I should. The past I can forget; and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have him for a brother, if it seemed for the best, and a co-worker in that which is good.'

"He'd never make a noise, I'm sure, about Temperance. So don't cherish a groundless hope. His connections are highly respectable, and would disapprove of such a thing. Every one doesn't look at this movement as we do, Arnold.'

"That I know. And yet how strange, and how inconsistent is it all! Look at it. Those respectable people, as you call them, desire order, and wish to see property respected and life regarded as sacred. And yet, when asked to discountenance that which leads to more disorder than aught else, to the destruction of property and the sacrifice, in almost every shape, of life, they decline on the ground that there is no need for it, that others don't do it, and that ardent spirits, in other words, the cause of tumult and loss of property and life, are all right enough. I say it's inconsistent, and no man can fairly say it's otherwise.'

"I don't deny it, Arnold. But there it is. And even grandmother is no better than the rest of 'em.'

"Perhaps not; indeed I fear she isn't. But, Julia, let us do what seems to us right; and if others won't do likewise, if they will scoff and laugh, let them do so. I will, God helping me.'

"And I hope to help you, brother. And you must help me to the best and wisest course in regard to this affair.'

"I will try, Julia.'

"We discussed the subject very gravely. She smoothed down some of my prejudices, as she called them, against Edward Yates, and it was agreed between us that I was to talk to uncle Rowland about what had formed the theme of our somewhat animated conversation."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### A MYSTERY.

EDWARD YATES was so penitent and apparently sincere in his promises of amendment, his position was so unexceptionable, and his connections so respectable, Julia had given him her

heart so unreservedly, and his affection for her was so ardent, that Mr. Ray and Arnold, and grandmother Ray, yielded their consent, and Mr. Yates and Miss Haworth stood engaged. This would be in August, perhaps. I am not clear as to the precise time.

Of this I am, however, well informed, that within a few weeks of this great event Arnold received one morning a letter that agitated him in almost every fibre of his frame. He was at breakfast; but the unwelcome news contained in the epistle created quite a nausea for the simple and wholesome fare before him. This circumstance excited curiosity and stimulated inquiry.

"What now, Arnold?" Mr. Rowland asked, vivaciously. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Drunkenness again, grandmother. 'Woe be unto him that giveth his neighbour drink!' If it isn't a curse, I doubt if we have one."

"Tut! child," she replied, tossing her head contemptuously. "There was drunkenness before you or I were born, and we shall leave it as rife as we found it when we depart hence. So don't so distress yourself about it."

"What is it, my boy?" Mr. Ray asked a second time with lively interest.

"Jones is ruined, uncle," Arnold replied, with troubled utterance. "Ruined for time, and I fear for eternity. All is out. He's been dismissed by his congregation, and a regular smash-up is in process. Mrs. Jones and the children are going to M——, to reside with her father; Jones is to be left to shift for himself, and Miss Foster is to—do as she can."

"Which has been the fate of millions, long before she was born," Rowland replied.

"From whom is the letter, Arnold?" This inquiry was from Julia.

"Felicia." He handed it to his sister with a heavy sigh.

"It's a pity for the family and this Miss Foster," Mr. Ray observed, reflectively.

"It shows to my mind," Mrs. Ray remarked, "the undesirability of a minister being so much in the power of his people. Had he been independent of them this need not have happened."

"What do you mean, mother, that the dismissal wouldn't have happened, or the intemperance?"

"I mean the being turned out of house and home, of course."



"Well, then, I think it shows the excellence of the arrangement. You wouldn't, surely, have a man occupy a pulpit who's in the habit of drinking to that excess that he can't read out his text?"

"Of course not. But you are so nice at this day. Once it was nought thought of, a preacher being a little the livelier for a glass of wine. Really, we are ridiculously particular now-a-days."

"Why, it's not such a bad case, after all, Arnold," Mr. Ray said, disregarding his mother's observation, and meaning to speak cheerfully. "Mrs. Jones and the children will be all right; at any rate, not a long way wrong. And as for Jones himself, why it may do him good to be taught by a little adversity that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God in the form of drunkenness. The man has nobody to blame but himself, and he richly deserves what he's now reaping. The saddest feature of the affair is this Miss Foster. But she's character and abilities, my lad, and will therefore likely enough soon meet with another situation. You must understand, Arnold, that we can't afford to be Philanthropists-General for all the wretchedness caused by drink; nor repairers of all the misfortunes it sows broadcast over the land. Hadn't we better say no more about it, eh? If you attempt to give every heavily-burdened traveller along life's highway a lift, to lend a hand to every one you find wallowing in the mire, or howling in the slough of despond, you'll have a sorry journey, *I* can tell you. We must do what we can, but we *must* make a selection. And I say, make your selection near home in the first place. Begin at the centre, and work out to the circumference; and as this Miss Foster is somewhere near this outer line, we shall not be likely to come at her yet."

The seriousness of Arnold's face was broken by what his uncle saw was a forced smile. He received back the letter, rose from the table, and without a word started for the mill. Julia at the same time left the room.

"I see one thing very clearly, mother," Mr. Ray observed, speaking with unusual distinctness, "which is this: that this Felicia Foster isn't a long way from the centre of Arnold's heart, wheresoever I may place her in the sphere of benevolence."

"Arnold's heart, Rowland? Nonsense! how you talk!"

"Well, you'll see, some of these days."

"But she's a friendless, penniless girl, isn't she? Something of an outcast?"

"I believe so, mother."

"Then, however near she might be to the lad's heart, you'd try to dislodge her, I presume?"

"Dislodge her! not I indeed. Why should I? I judge from allusions I've heard from his own lips, that she's a very worthy person. Pretty I know she is: at least in my eye. I've seen her twice, perhaps thrice."

"Rowland! you really are too regardless of the common proprieties of good society! What would respectable people say? And, besides, how prejudicial to Arnold's success and standing such a foolish step would be! You *must* counsel and guide him."

"Guide him! Rowland Ray guide him! I'm not a fraction more than a fool beside Arnold, mother! He's a head as clear as crystal, and the wisdom of sages in his very instincts. I feel perfectly satisfied that Arnold will commit no error."

"Then *you* have fallen into one, or at any rate you've supposed what has no foundation in fact; for I'm as sure as that I sit here, that if he's in love, as young people phrase it, with this poor servant, he's committed a very grave error. She'd be a clog to him through life if he were to marry her."

"Servant, mother, servant! But letting that pass, why should she be a clog to him? How get you at that conclusion? You don't know her."

"But you say she's poor, and in no way connected that you know of."

"Well, what of that?"

"What of that? It proves what I say."

"Oh, mother! how differently we look at things. She may be tidy, thrifty, clever, sober-minded; in short, a whole bundle of virtues in herself, in which case I submit if she wouldn't be likely to make a gem of a wife?"

"Rowland!" Mrs. Ray remonstrated, with an approach to peevishness, "you *will* get down to what I cannot but look upon as altogether lower, secondary matters."

"Mother, they're not secondary matters with me, whatever they may be with you. They're primary. If a man marry, I hold it's desirable he should find a wife. But can any female be a wife, in the proper sense of the term, who hasn't the wife qualifications I've named? No. The reason why we have so many mismanaged homes is that we've so many unqualified wives. Look at brother Thompson, haven't you there a case in

point? Then Miss Foster is a stanch abstainer, and that lifts her high in my vulgar estimation."

Mrs. Ray had put on her gold-rimmed glasses, taken up the paper, and managed by some talent of abstraction to become absorbed in its contents. Of course the subject was dropped, and Mr. Ray, with his incorrigibly depraved tastes, strolled out.

That week Julia and he drove down to Throng, and called on Mr. Noble, Mr. Harry Smirk, and others. In returning, Miss Foster was again referred to, and she and Arnold were soon the topic of an animated colloquy. Julia assured her uncle that for a long time a mutual attachment had been growing between them, and that, as a consequence, Arnold was anxious respecting the movements of Felicia. No formal engagement had been entered into; but that her brother meditated one, she hadn't a doubt.

Mr. Ray saw there was that which warranted—even called for—some allusion on his part to the subject. The uncle and nephew chatted confidentially and long. The former found a strong passion, curbed, it is true, by the sober hand of restraint, but ardent and active, carrying with it each moral faculty and inner voice. It was no gossamer growth, sunned and forced by the smiles of physical beauty, but a noble reality, rooted in the soil of true worth, and thence drinking up health and vigour and stamina. It was arranged that she should reside with friends a year, and that then a marriage should take place.

The reader, in particular the young reader, will no doubt picture Julia and Arnold as living in a grand state of ecstasy. With what a delicious delirium of delight would their hearts throb, as they found themselves nearing the fulfilment of their hopes! But they were not beyond the reach of perturbing influences. One thing especially agitated and even pained them, and that was their uncle's intimacy with Hudson's family. He was a frequent visitor at the farm; manifested great interest in the small stock; and didn't even disdain such petty details as the arrangements and conveniences of Mrs. Hudson's kitchen, sitting and bedrooms. Why was it? repeatedly demanded the strained curiosity of such of Mr. Ray's relatives as happened to be aware of this intimacy.

In the November of this year, that curiosity reached a kind of fever-height. Mr. Ray had been away from home several weeks, and returned somewhere about the first of the month, more than ordinarily excited. For the first time he manifested

ill-disguised displeasure on learning that Arnold had invited a few friends for the fifth, including the Rev. Mr. Noble, Mr. Smirk, senior, Edward Yates, James, and Gilbert. It was inconvenient and awkward, and his nephew might have let it alone until his return. He, the nephew, would just have to entertain the party himself, as he, the uncle, had an engagement, and meant to keep it. He wouldn't put it off for fifty pounds.

Arnold was perplexed, and sought his sister alone, to ascertain how their uncle's strange humour appeared in *her* eyes. Stupid, wilful, foolish. They invited their grandmother's opinion. It was what she had never known a drunkard do, and was what few drunkards would do, she was sure. Their uncle wasn't wise in any step, and was being rendered very heady by his Temperance. She didn't like widow Hudson, and they might depend on it he was engaged to look after something belonging to her. She was a crafty woman; and by loud talk of abstinence obtained for herself and family many favours. The brother and sister were much put out by their uncle's obstinacy; but as his decision was unshakable, they, of course, had to yield.

The party was lively, agreeable, and entertaining. Mr. Noble abounded in amusing anecdote; Mr. Smirk in professional incident; and James, Gilbert, and others in easy, playful banter. Arnold and Julia hoped their uncle would forget or forego his engagement. But no, at seven o'clock he rose, asked to be excused, and left the room, very scantily concealing a restlessness which, during the previous half-hour, had manifestly been whipped and spurred by disturbing thoughts of some description. Edward Yates, at a signal from Mr. Gilbert Ray, followed that gentleman into the front garden. Years afterwards, the latter made, in *substance*, the following statement to Arnold:—

"Yates and I there and then concerted to act as spies on brother Rowland. This, we were aware, was a somewhat bold proceeding; but we were moved thereto, and felt justified and protected by your solicitude respecting his movements, and your little chagrin at his leaving the company so abruptly. And to these considerations may be added the fact, that I had no expectation we should stumble on aught derogatory to his character, but rather the reverse. Indeed I felt sure at the time that it would turn out we had been following him on some mission of charity and mercy.

"It was, as you'll remember, a close, heavy, dark night, its gloom and stillness being only slightly relieved by the distant illuminations and shouting incident to gunpowder plot. As a consequence, we had to maintain a proximity to him that placed in imminent peril the object of our expedition.

"'He's making for Martha Hudson's as sure as we follow,' I whispered to Yates, as we turned into North Lane. Just then I felt annoyed, and a very slight impediment would have been enough to turn me back. Yates, however, pushing on, I allowed myself to follow. Beside the Three-Acre Gate there was a crackling bonfire, about which were dancing Tom Hudson and his little brothers and sisters; Rowland cautiously kept from the circuit of its light at such a cost of climbing and winding about, that I was fully convinced he was very, very wishful not to be seen. 'There's a cause for that,' I observed to myself. The reflection I didn't at all relish, but it would, nevertheless, like a hundred stern convictions we cannot resist, force itself upon me.

"For the space of twenty minutes we lost our clue; not doubting that he had burrowed, so to speak, under widow Hudson's roof, we crept like cautious burglars round the house in search of a chink that would afford us an insight into the meaning of movements which we couldn't even approximately divine. At length our search was rewarded, we came upon a small window so unskilfully blinded, that a treacherous corner afforded a full view of the room, its occupants, and even their employments. On one side of the fire sat Mrs. Hudson, before her a large box, and on her right hand a many-coloured mountain of children's clothes; brother Rowland was in the centre of the hearth, nursing fondly poor Alfred. I distinctly remember being strangely moved by that, of course my first sight of the dear, unfortunate lad; he appeared that night particularly mild, quiet, and timid, as if he had been cast in a mould of perfect innocence. Then that strange stare, that sweet bewilderment, which sometimes covers the soft vacancy of his lamb-like face, was then out in all its gentle, fascinating force. How I wondered that his slightly-parted lips, so bloodless, never moved! But I wondered yet more when Rowland kissed him with such fervour, and allowed Martha Hudson to witness those large, rolling tears, that reflected, like heavy dew-drops, the dancing fire-light as they fell on the upturned face of the astonished child.

"Yates and I were speechless, we could frame no supposition that would meet and explain all the points of the case; and we

were made ashamed of the vulgar and prying character of what we tried to persuade ourselves was only a well-meant joke, and so turned away, scourged by reproaches, and yet not less tormented with a keen longing for such light as should be explanatory of what seemed so mysterious and dark. We were glad when we found the company had left, and that you didn't press us to gratify your questioning look."

We will now quote from Arnold. He writes:—

"It was midnight before uncle Ray returned. He entered the room he had so unceremoniously quitted, as I then thought, with a heavy step and a sorrowful countenance; neither of us spoke for several minutes; he placed an elbow on the broad mantel-shelf, and rested the right side of his blanched face on his open hand. I heard a deep sigh, and looking up, detected him in the act of brushing away a falling tear; I was instantly very much, if not violently, agitated, and there and then prompted to do what that very evening I had longed, but lacked nerve, to attempt; so rising and closing my book, I stepped up to him and, touching him on the elbow, said,—

"Uncle! what ails you? What has ailed you this evening? The last three days? What has given birth to this misery that seems so strong within you? Am I, or Julia, in the way? Do we make you thus wretched? If so, be frank with us, and we will relieve you of the heavy cross of our presence!' Poor man! How little we then knew of his heavy cross!

"My lad, hush!' he slowly and gravely replied, 'and don't give to my misery tenfold force. If you were out of my way, if I hadn't you to look at, to confer with, to live in, that way would be a—God help me! as I trust He will do. Arnold,' he continued, turning round and looking me full in the face, 'are there sins for which there is no forgiveness?'

"That is a question for a theologian, uncle.'

"Perhaps it is,' he replied, musingly. 'But hear me again: suppose you, or I, were driven mad by a sin, and unable, as of course we should be, to repent and sue for pardon, would punishment await us in eternity, and should we be classed amongst those who had obstinately refused to repent?'

"I really am unable to say, uncle.'

"Oh! Arnold. Where is Julia?'

"In her room.'

"And Yates?'

"Gone with Gilbert.'

"With Gilbert, has he? Will Julia and you keep to your temperance, my lad? At all times? In all circumstances? Through scorn? Through good report and evil report? Oh, what a curse, what a curse is this drinking system of ours! You and Noble know something, and yet you know nothing, in a way, of the length and breadth of this black, this enormous evil! You see its ravages in the streets, as the destruction that wasteth at noonday; whereas I've seen something of its ravages behind the curtain of concealment, as the pestilence that walketh in darkness, where its victims writhe in disease and madness and the agonies of death! Oh! that I could forget what I've seen! That I could blind memory, so that it wouldn't be able to torment me with the past! But why so? Rather ought I to covet the power to undo my share of wrong, to repair the injury I've wrought. Injury! Injury! Wrong! Wrong!" he repeated, as to himself. "What think you of Yates, Arnold? Will he hold?"

"I hope so, uncle."

"Hope so. Ah, so do I; if he holds, they're all right; if he lets go, they're ruined. Mark my words. I've something, Arnold—not now, though, I'll tell you when more myself. Good night."

"Good night, uncle."

"But no good night did it prove to him; at least, it brought him but a small measure of sleep, if any at all."

"Surely," I said to myself, as I listened to his heavy moaning, 'each thought is as a vulture to his peace! Each recollection a scorpion to his soul! Poor uncle! Poor uncle!'"

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## CHAPTER XII.

### ROOK COTTAGE AGAIN.

THE morning following Mr. Ray's sleepless night saw him summoned in hot haste to Rook Cottage. When he arrived, Mr. and Mrs. Thompson were in furious dialogue; the former pacing the room with a quick step, the latter playing with the cold fragments of a late breakfast.

"Well, what is it, Thompson?" Mr. Rowland asked, as, uninvited, he took a chair.

"You've a pretty exaggerated notion what it is, I'll be bound," Mrs. Thompson threw in, with all due scorn and contempt, no

doubt. "If aught happens to get the least awry down here, it's reported at Prospect House in almost no time. I heartily wish I were a hundred——"

"What is it, I say?" Mr. Ray repeated, with a wild stare of impatient wonder. "I've not the remotest idea to what you're referring."

"It's our hopeful son, sir, who's furnished the subject of this lively controversy," Mr. Thompson Ray replied, adopting a vein of bitter irony. "You're much to be pitied, Rowland, that you don't possess such an heir."

"The heir is about as good as aught there is to inherit," the wife observed, already warmed into an indignant mood.

"What a happy knack of maternal squinting you've got, Emma. She really can't, or won't, see, as a fault in her son, that which is hurrying him straight to ruin, as fast as I am rushing to bankruptcy."

"An end to this folly. It's unseemly, and it's very wrong. What's again amiss with Pearson? And why am I summoned?" Rowland spoke with a touch of sternness.

"This is amiss, sir," Thompson had halted, and stood, a strangely altered and emaciated man, opposite his brother: "this son of mine, and nephew of yours, has been trying his hand at forgery, at the expense and to the disgrace of the firm, and two of his uncles have this morning declared that they will prosecute him. Now, because we are his parents, in no way worthy, that I can see, of a better son, and because he claims kindred with yourself, we have thus sent for you, to beseech you to interpose and save us, if possible, from the public shame of this fresh disgrace."

Mr. Rowland shut his eyes, compressed tightly his lips, and groaned.

"What has led to this?" he asked, after a brief silence.

"Drink, sir, drink!"

"Drink a fiddlestick!" the mother replied with peevish energy.

"I say it *has*, Emma!" the father retorted.

"Then I say it *hasn't*!" was the warm rejoinder; "and my say is as good and as orthodox as yours, any day. It's want of money. That, of course, is on the face of the thing. People don't forge for drink."

"But what's the want of money arisen from? And why was it sought?"

"It's arisen from either his father's poverty, or stinginess, and



was sought to pay pressing debts with, or to prolong life. You wouldn't have him die of want, I hope, nor would your brother, surely!"

"Oh, Emma! Emma! We've much to answer for already, and don't, don't swell the charge yet more. We've ruined our son by bringing him up a drunkard; and for our souls' sake withhold the addition of impudent falsehood to this sin. He'd drunk himself out of funds, Rowland, and into straits, and to obtain money, risked this fearful and ruinous venture. Rare capital will this be for Noble, Arnold, and a hundred others!"

"If I hear of Arnold making capital out of it," Mrs. Thompson replied, quivering with excitement, "I'll slap him in the face the first time I meet him. Sneaking, smooth-tongued hypocrite that he is!"

"Hush, hush, hush, Emma!" Mr. Rowland called out. "Don't let me hear such epithets applied to my nephew. He'd be the last person in the world, I'm sure, to make capital out of any one's misfortunes. Not a nobler lad lives and breathes than——"

"My nephew! my nephew!" Mrs. Thompson replied, speaking in a tone of indignant and almost savage disgust. "That's your way. It's by such partiality my son has been disheartened and ruined. Isn't he your nephew as well as the other? Why, then, pat, or pet Arnold until you become ridiculous, and spurn Pearson as if he were the meanest dog? It's enough to drive any lad of spirit to drink."

"Drinking doesn't mend matters, Emma; and it certainly isn't the way to gain my favour."

"No, it doesn't; but it enables you to *forget* matters that would otherwise gall and vex you. That it does: I know that much."

"Oh, this drinking!" Thompson wailed out.

"Thompson!" his wife said smartly and imperiously, "don't be more foolish than circumstances call for. You disgust one with your whining. You set your son a drinking example, which would have done credit to any publican, I'm sure."

"It surprises me," Rowland added, following up the charge of his sister, "that for your son's sake—leaving out of view your own—you've not yet abandoned the glass."

"Abandoned the glass! I can't! I know it's a bad example. I'm aware it's ruining me. I'm prepared to believe and endorse every word you may say that's bad of it. But what then? As to forsaking it, I'm powerless! Perfectly powerless!"

"Nonsense! you're *not*. Shame upon you! raving such weakness."

At Mr. Rowland Ray's request Pearson was called in. He brought with him a strong flavour of tobacco and brandy; dissipation of the lowest order in his dress, impudence of the boldest degree in his manner. There still lingered in his reeling brain and wandering eye, and parched lips and muddled thoughts, the stern penalties of the previous night's debauch.

The uncle expressed his deep grief at hearing of the serious crime committed by his nephew, and earnestly and affectionately urged him to amend his ways, promising that, if possible, no prosecution should be commenced; and further, that the offender should be restored to his place in the counting-house.

That offender appeared callous as flint. No blush of shame rose to his cheek, nor word of gratitude to his lips. No sign of repentant emotion did he exhibit, nor evidence of feeblest yearning after amendment of life. He appeared not to see the disgrace with which he had blackened his name, nor yet the ruin to which, like an impetuous torrent, he was rushing. He even attempted an extenuation of his crime, and tried boldly to justify his intemperance by the plea that drinking to excess was a custom prevalent amongst all classes.

This circumstance the writer of these sketches much deplores. He does so on this account, amongst others: had Pearson been penitent and profuse of promises of reformation at this time, his subsequent intemperate and reckless career would have illustrated all the more strikingly the force of drinking habits. It would have shown how difficult it is, even after a most timely, humiliating, and remorse-exciting warning, to break that chain which is annually dragging its thousands down into deep perdition. But facts are proverbially stubborn things. They obstinately refuse to be altered by any imagination, however powerful it may be; and as the author prefers them before wild fictions—albeit the latter are much more pliant and convenient, of course—the reader is requested to accept, unmurmuringly, the bald, prosaic truth as placed before him.

"Thompson," Mr. Rowland observed with warmth, when they were left alone, at the earnestly-expressed desire of the latter gentleman, "I will, if possible, extricate your son from this, to all of us, I presume, extremely painful position."

"Thank you, Rowland. Thank you, with all my heart."

"I feel, however, I ought to warn you, that in my judgment

Pearson is a ruined young man. There appears no hope for him. His vile habits are asserting complete dominion over him. They have him down, as it were, in the dust—in the very mire—and will as surely vanquish—strangle—him, if I may so speak, as that I now address you. Now, Thompson, between ourselves—I wouldn't thus upbraid you in the presence of others—but between ourselves, you are to blame, in part at least, for this sad state of things. You set him the example, afforded him facilities for drinking; and all notwithstanding, in spite of, many cautions and entreaties."

"I've done wrong, Rowland. I admit it, deplore it. I'm now doing wrong. I know it. But I'm not *solely* to blame for this. His mother isn't guiltless. She's always held it up as a manly thing to drink; and I believe—not that I wish to lessen by one iota my share of the sin of our disgrace—that this notion has influenced him quite as much as my example. You'll never make successful way against intemperance, Rowland, until you bring people to see and feel that it's a disgrace to drink to excess."

"Do you feel it to be such, Thompson?"

"I do. A foul, black disgrace."

"Then why don't you wipe it from your name and character?"

"Because I *can't*. I'll be frank with you, Rowland. If you were to ask me why I didn't when I might have done, my answer would be, that she set a face against abstinence, cold and hard as steel. Emma has from the first scouted it as a mean, low, silly whim, fit only for boys, weak-minded females, and crotchety parsons."

"Well, let her alone. She's not here to defend herself. What mean you, Thompson, when you say you *can't* wipe out this disgrace? Paralyzed by such a delusion, you'll be a ruined man ere you're aware."

"Ruined man! I *am* a ruined man! I know it. Ruined beyond all hope of recovery! More: I hate myself because of this very conviction. But there's no help. The habit holds me in bonds strong as iron."

"Brother!" Rowland said gravely, "this is a sad, sad confession! I do trust you are consciously raving, and not, in your judgment, reasoning."

"I know what I'm saying. I weigh what I now say. I'm not speaking under excitement. I've said all this and lots more to myself hundreds of times."

"But you should try, man!" Rowland almost bawled out, staring at his brother wildly.

"Try! Haven't I tried scores of times? Haven't I gone days without touching a drop? Yes, and set my teeth and clenched my hands in the frenzy of my determination to hold out. 'I'll do it! I'll do it!' I've said. 'I'll be like Rowland and Gilbert and Arnold and Noble!' Alas! alas! There has always come from some quarter an influence which in a short while has melted down my resolution, and left me at the mercy of the raging demon within."

"Raging demon!" Rowland exclaimed. "Verily, you correctly characterize the thirst for intoxicating stimulants. It is indeed a raging, insatiable demon."

"Insatiable demon!" We are not using the words of Mr. Thompson, but we believe we are faithfully conveying the sentiments to which he then gave utterance; not adding a shade thereto, nor deducting a fraction therefrom. "Insatiable demon!" You think you know something of it, Rowland. But let me tell you that next to nothing you know, placed beside what I've seen. Oh! what a torment! what a tyrant! what a devastator of homes, and hopes, and happiness, and health, and life, is a strong liking for drink! It clamours, demands to be indulged, at the cost of reputation and peace, and heaven itself. It will take no denial. Through blackest disgrace, down into deepest crime, on, sometimes to the scaffold, it will drive its miserable slave, in its desperate expedients to quench its burning thirst. I've seen it drive a maddened parent to sell the chastity of his virgin daughter! Yes, I have: and the bargain was accompanied by such revolting details of drunken obscenity, that even my stupefied sensibilities were shocked, and my lethargic indignation aroused. I've seen it! Yes, I have! in the person of a bloated, staggering, half-senseless father, enter the desolate home of five motherless children, and heard it, in the husky, menacing voice of a drunken brute in human shape, command a ragged, trembling child to take her sister's little frocks and her own, given but the day before by benevolent ladies for Sunday wear, to the pawnbroker's, and bring him back, without delay, whatever might be ventured on them, for drink! Yes, brother, and although I remonstrated, and although I threatened, and although we quarrelled, and nearly fought that evening, the deed was done, and the tear-filled eyes of the little ones saw their treasures borne away, and the landlord saw again smiling his victim, who quitted not the scene of his

carousal until he had once more reduced himself to the straits of a penniless man. Oh, sir! I wondered that night, intoxicated though I was, what was transpiring in the court of the Judge of all the earth. I even marvelled, *I*, hardened wretch though I was, that the earth, which had drunk up the hot tears of those shivering children, did not that night open and swallow up the tavern that held this monster of a father, and sanctioned and aided in this enormous wickedness.

"But incidents more revolting than even these I've witnessed. I've seen a wedding-ring, sir, of gold, pure gold, bartered for ardent spirits. And what of that ring did I learn? What went round the company, under cover of excited whispers and looks of stony horror? Why, this, sir: That not an hour before it had been stolen from the finger of a dying wife's hand, and brought in a delirium of haste and joy and maddening thirst to that house where hearts are murdered and souls are damned, with the clammy sweat, as it were, of death upon it. Yes, brother! that drunkard's wife was dead; but ere her body had lost the little warmth left by life; ere the kind hands, even, of ministering woman had softly arranged the wasted limbs for that long repose which no drunkard's brawl can disturb, the pledge of their affection and fidelity was being converted into the bane of health and peace and hope by him who had sworn to love her with a love in life which only acquires intensity by the separation caused by death. He had loved, sir, warmly and sincerely; but no plea of fondness, or respect, would this demon allow. Give! give! was his cry. Drink! drink! I *must* have. Drink! although children perish of want! Although a loving, patient wife be dying! Although grim death hover about and the great judgment be hastening on! Drink! even though it cost the pledge of holy love, when the light of that love is being quenched for ever. Drink! by any sacrifice, by any means, if need be! Burn, plunder, murder, forge, if without those crimes my thirst cannot be slaked. On! on! in my service, through tears and blood!—through hosts of torn hearts and heaps of ragged poverty! Drink I *must* have, *will* have, or perish! Oh, Rowland! the folly! the folly!—a thousand times multiplied—of those fathers who, like myself, allow their offspring to acquire a longing, however mild, for intoxicating liquors. No prophet can foretell where it may end. That longing may become an iron despot, relaxing not his hold until he has plunged them into blackness and darkness and despair! Better doom them to poverty, to

ignorance, to banishment. Better see them sicken in lovely childhood and pass away, whilst memory may linger about them as about a hallowed treasure, which God knows I wish had been my happy lot in respect to one, if not more, of my ill-starred, unhappy family. God have mercy on us!"

The poor man covered his face, from no counterfeited shame, and wept bitterly.

Rowland sat for several minutes in thoughtful abstraction. The statements and admissions of his brother were an enigma, himself a dark riddle. When he did speak, it was tenderly. He urged reformation, spoke of forbearance and help. The writhing victim of intemperance but shook his head. He thanked Rowland for his sympathy and promises on behalf of Pearson. As to himself, there was no hope. His reply to Rowland's endeavours to prompt him to renewed effort to throw off the yoke was, that he judged—knew, indeed—that such was his bondage and weakness, that any effort would only issue in failure. "It's no use! No use!" he persisted. "My doom is dark, I know, but not more dark than certain. I'm ruined—lost; ruined by drink, my son, my wife, it may be—ah, it may be—my daughter bearing me company! All sharing my shame and adding to the weight of my woe. I shall drink and drink until I sink, sink, sink for ever!" How true the words of God's precious Book: "And they said, there is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### WHAT TOOK PLACE AT PROSPECT HOUSE.

THE forgery was hushed up, and Pearson was allowed to go unpunished. By Rowland, Arnold, Julia, and grandmother, it was frequently and sorrowfully discussed; Mrs. Ray expressed herself as really thankful, as she contemplated this crime, that Arnold was an abstainer.

"Drink again, my boy!" Mr. Ray exclaimed.

"Yes, sir; and drink yet once more, if you please, Mr. Ray."

"You see that figure, in soiled and seedy black, creeping round to your kitchen-door; how unwholesome from head to heel! what a wan, spiritless, leering object, to carry the form of a man!"

Yes, Mr. Ray saw it, and so did Arnold, who turned pale as sickness itself, and looked intently at his uncle.

This figure had the appearance of a clergyman fast running to waste; his hat was browned and bulged; his shoes mired and soleless; his neckcloth, which had once doubtless been white, was deeply stricken with jaundice; whilst his frayed linen and neglected hands and face betokened an utter estrangement from soap and water and starch. Yet he who stood there, proclaiming so loudly neglect and poverty and want; who was so timid, humbled, and apparently spirit-broken, had been a man of courage and note, of position and influence. His appearance as a speaker had been hailed with rapture; his discourses as a preacher listened to with deepest interest; his name had been pronounced with reverence; his society courted with eagerness. He had been a happy man, and the wealthy had counted it an honour to welcome him as a distinguished guest. He had looked from a lofty eminence on vice and destitution, and the misery of degradation.

He asked for Arnold, bowed low when that youth appeared, and waited for him to speak, mutely appealing to his generous compassion.

"Mr. Jones! oh, Mr. Jones! This, this is shocking! What are you doing here, and in this plight?"

"The best I can, my lad. I'm an outcast, without home, comforts, even friends, unless I possess one in you."

"Oh, Mr. Jones, I'd never meant, never expected to see this. I'm ready to help you; but have you forsaken what has been your curse?"

"I'm forsaking it, *I am indeed*; I've not been in an inn or beer-shop for weeks, I've *not*." It came to Arnold's ears in less than a month that the previous night Jones slept in the lowest beer-shop in Throng.

"Do you keep sober?"

"I do indeed, Mr. Haworth." But twelve hours ago he was drunk, drunk as gin can make a man.

"And you really are endeavouring to recover to some extent the position you have lost?"

"I am, sir." Each day he was becoming more reckless.

"You wish for a little pecuniary assistance to help you in this upward struggle?"

"I do, my lad." In plain English, he wanted it that he might, as he then said in his heart, drink and forget his sorrow.

Arnold was pleased, if not satisfied; Mr. Jones was asked in, hospitably entertained, much improved externally, and sent away with his pockets replenished, his heart revived, and Arnold's and his uncle's best wishes ringing in his ears.

But whither did he go? What did he first do? We happen to know: he went direct to the nearest tavern in Throng; nor did he pause in his Bacchanalian revels until on himself and companions he had squandered every halfpenny that had been given to him.

Yes, and look at this case; think of it, reader. To obtain this drink, his fiery demon prompted this once respectable man to act the part of a base impostor; to scheme, to lie, to counterfeited penitence. Him who had occupied a pulpit and ruled a church; who couldn't but remember even then the warnings and counsels he had so faithfully and successfully addressed to others; who *must* have seen enough in the termination of many a career of vice to render it an appalling and revolting picture, and who, by an inevitable necessity, must have been perfectly aware that his own ruinous conduct was sure—apart from a thorough and speedy reformation—to end in a dark and terrible doom.

"A likely story," some sneering sceptic observes ironically. "An absurd invention! a clumsy fiction! nothing more."

Then let the writer assure such reader, and that most solemnly, that it is *not* an invention. Very, very far otherwise; nor is it a solitary instance. Not *one* alone, but seven ministers, to his own certain knowledge, have been dragged from the high office and dignity of expounders of God's revealed truth down to the deep degradation of pothouse brawlers and buffoons. They dallied with the glass, not dreaming of its power; they laughed, it may be, when warned that it contained withering curses. "We are high and lifted up," they said, "what shall harm our conscience or spread a cloud over our reason? What shall disturb our foundations? Shall the spider's web become to us a yoke? shall our desires be to us as Pharaoh? are we children, that wine and strong drink must be as the forbidden fruit? We know when to partake and when to deny, and need not be in bondage to any vow." And yet, "they erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment."

A quiet, monotonous fortnight passed at Prospect House, Mr.



Ray, to use a familiar phrase, keeping close quarters, not even stepping up more than once to Mrs. Hudson's. At the end, however, of that fortnight an incident occurred which deserves to be chronicled. It was a dark night, and Mr. Ray sat reading all alone beside a cheerful fire and a bright light. Arnold and his sister were at uncle Gilbert's, and Mrs. Ray was in occupation of her room.

The incident to which we allude was the visit to Mr. Rowland of what he described as a strange, muffled, oddly-veiled form. We could state *whence* it came, but not *how* it came to Prospect House. Doubtless it would have appeared to us and to you, reader, as shrouded in mystery. Stealthily, it may be, it bent its steps towards Mr. Ray's residence, stealthily opened the garden-gate, and stealthily peered up at the windows, directing towards the one blushing with a ruddy light a dark and mysteriously malicious frown. Its very knock at the front door would, perhaps, have been suggestive of some strange, mysterious purpose; whilst its whispered request to see Mr. Ray alone would have left no misgiving as to its having in hand a business meant to be, to such spies as might happen to be looking on, hidden and impenetrable.

Its appearance at the room-door, announced without name by the affrighted servant, startled Mr. Ray. He rose in a flurry, passed a hand across his eyes, as if suspicious that they were playing him a trick, and stared hard at the—apparition, it may be, he considered it. The form advanced, and, for Mr. Ray's relief, spoke in a low voice.

"Don't be alarmed, and don't mention my name, and above all, admit neither a third nor fourth party into this room so long as I remain." This request was addressed to the astonished listener as a demand; he adopted all necessary precautions, and, when reseated, the form resumed in a low key, and said something very like the following,—

"For several days I've longed for an interview, Rowland; and knowing that Arnold and Julia were at Gilbert's, I've embraced this opportunity. I appear in this barbarous costume because I wish not to be recognized by friend or foe. Rowland, I want money."

"Money? It's a common want."

"With me it's an urgent one, sir; and, though common, I've never before, that I am aware of, asked such a favour at your hands."

"You've not, and on that very account astonish me all the more."

"But may be I shall astonish you yet again when I inform you for what I want it."

"Well, say on."

"I wish to go abroad; to the States, Australia, Canada, anywhere."

"Alone?"

"No, with the family. We are both bent on it; we are tired of this sort of life."

"What to do abroad?"

"Aught that's lawful, and will pay; we can't get on here. In another place we might."

"Not with his habits."

"But he'll reform; I believe he will, for I shall assist him. In heart I'm tired—sick—of this drinking—disgusted, in short; only I don't like to flatter you by saying so openly and to everybody; sick of it! I'd need. The dose I've had to swallow has been strong enough, I should suppose; sober, Thompson's a prince of a husband; tipsy, he's a snarling, biting cur."

"I'll help you, but I can't just now."

"On this condition I'm exacting, you'll observe: that it is not mentioned to any one."

"Not to Arnold?"

"The *last* person; keep my secret, Rowland; I keep yours."

"Mine!" Mr. Ray has stated that he felt the blood there and then ebb away from his face, and that he hardly knew where he stood for a minute. "What do you mean?"

"Don't be alarmed, sir; I'll keep it as safely as if it were at the bottom of the sea."

"You triumph in placing me under obligations. I don't acknowledge that I'm so placed, and see not, therefore, that I *owe* you either thanks or duty."

"Will the walls carry a secret, Rowland? may I whisper?" She brought her mouth close to his ear, and said something with which the name of Mrs. Hudson was mixed up. Mr. Ray dropped into a chair, flung himself back, and gasped.

"Has Martha betrayed me?" he asked.

"Not that I'm aware of," Mrs. Thompson replied.

"Who shares this secret with you?"

"Thompson and another, and perhaps another; I may inform you before we leave. But don't torment yourself; it's in custody

secure as a safe. You'll help us? Thank you; we intend taking Pearson out. What a mercy if we can yet save him!"

"What a mercy indeed! May I call to-morrow?"

"If you like. Good night."

The barbarous costume was re-arranged, and its wearer glided out into the darkness.

In the morning Mr. Rowland called, and in the evening informed Arnold, having obtained permission to do so, that his aunt and uncle Thompson were preparing to emigrate. The intelligence excited in his nephew's mind mingled feelings.

"And the conversation," he went on, "in which this news was conveyed to me, apprized me that a secret, which I had hoped was locked in the breasts of but two individuals, has somehow made its escape and is abroad, not in open day, certainly, but in dangerous proximity to publicity. This being the case, I've resolved to keep it from you no longer. You'll have observed that I've appeared interested in the boy placed under the care of Mrs. Hudson?"

"Of course I have," Arnold replied.

"And you've tried hard, no doubt, to find out some circumstance explanatory of that interest."

"I've not tried hard, exactly—I've wondered about it. But of late I've supposed that the cause of your interest has been the affliction of the poor lad. He's really deaf and dumb, isn't he?" Mr. Ray covered his face, and replied there was no doubt of it.

"Poor little fellow! he's a nice boy."

"You don't ask whose he is, Arnold."

"I presume the child of some friend of yours, uncle."

"No."

"Not Mrs. Hudson's?"

"No."

"Her late husband's?"

"Not her late husband's; my *own* child, sir; my *own* child. Could he have spoken, he would have called me father, although God only knows how unworthy I feel of that dear and precious appellation."

"Your own child, uncle? I've always understood that aunt Ray died childless."

"You've understood as I meant you should all understand. At one time I meant never to own him. He was born in

London, a fine healthy child, I believe, and placed, soon after the discovery of his sad privation of hearing, in an institution for such cases, where he was well cared and liberally paid for. When, however, I became a sober man, parental affection began to assert itself. I relented, repented of my hardness, and experienced a strong desire to have him near me. In widow Hudson I found just such a nurse, and in her family and circumstances just such an opening as were required. And now, my boy, you've a key that will open to you the meaning of at least three movements, which I know have puzzled you. You see *one* reason why I've kept Mrs. Hudson on the farm. It was to provide a home near to myself for him; it was to indulge my paternal instinct; you see the why and wherefore of my regular and frequent visits. I've gone to nurse my own deaf and dumb boy, and you can no longer be in the dark as to my being so unreasonably ruffled about that fifth of November party; my leaving you so abruptly, and seeming so distressed when I returned. That night my child was to be brought to Mrs. Hudson's, and that night he came."

Arnold made no reply, his thoughts were floundering in a sea of amazement.

"Have I done wrong, sir?" Mr. Ray resumed. "Does this appear to you a sinful transaction? Does your keen eye detect any stains? Your delicate moral sense feel the presence of any iniquity?"

"No, uncle.

"Thank you; but why don't you trouble—vex—me with a host of impertinent questions? Your curiosity sleeps. You don't demand to know how he came to be thus afflicted. Why I once wickedly resolved not to own him; what became of his mother. You don't say, 'Uncle, let me know, *do* let me know *all*, that I may run and tell Julia and grandmother and Gilbert and James.' You don't care to get from effects to causes; to astonish your friends by lifting up the curtain of baffling secret, in flooding with revealing light that which has been hidden in Egyptian darkness."

"Because it might not be agreeable or convenient for you to answer such inquiries, uncle."

"You are right, Arnold; it might not. Unasked, however I'll tell you *one* thing now—many other things another time. That dear boy was born with hearing good and quick as yours. He lost it, I'm convinced, by a fall and a fright. A foul fall, a

terrible fright, poor fellow! And what was the cause of that fall, of that fright? That which has been the fertile cause of ten thousand times ten thousand mishaps, calamities, accidents. Drink! drink! drink!"

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## CHAPTER XIV.

MR. RAY AND MR. SMIRK.

Two years have passed. Mr. and Mrs. Thompson Ray and family, barring Pearson, are in the States of America. Julia Haworth and Edward Yates are married; also Arnold and Felicia. The former reside in the South; the latter at Prospect House.

It is evening, and Mr. Smirk, surgeon, is taking tea with Mr. Rowland Ray. They are alone, and in a talking mood.

"Thank you," the surgeon says, in the usual way, passing his cup, and smacking his lips in anticipation, perhaps, of a second supply of ham. "Thank you. It's very good. Why, it's several months, I declare, since I drank tea with you, Mr. Ray. I'm surprised I don't come oftener, for I always enjoy it amazingly. Ah, how time flies, to be sure! And what changes, sir! Heard from Thompson lately?"

"A week ago."

"Ah, a week ago. And how is friend Thompson?—Stay, how *was* he, I ought to say?"

"Only middling, Mr. Smirk."

"Only middling. Sorry to hear that. If only middling comes across the water, I surmise, Mr. Ray, that it's hardly middling on the other side. They naturally——"

"I suspect it really is very *far* from middling, sir."

"Steady still?" Mr. Rowland shakes his head, to indicate that on that point he is in a state of some doubt.

"Ah! I see. Pity, sir, pity. Sober, Thompson's a man, sir. Drunk, he's a —— Well, I'm quite of your way of thinking of late, Mr. Ray, on this subject of abstinence. Ah! sir, this drinking is a most monstrous evil. And one of the most serious things about it is this, you can't stop when you would, if once you get into full swing. I could name lots, now, of my small circle of friends, who know well enough they ought to pull up, but they can't. 'Smirk,' they'll say, 'we're going too fast. We know it. Ruining health, wrecking mind. But we find it the hardest work in the world

abating speed. We are aware we are rushing down hill, and that if we don't put on the break there must be a grand smash at the bottom. But what are we to do?' Ah! sir, it shows the importance of training; of attending to the formation of tastes and habits. There's Arnold, now, I'll be bound he's no stronger liking for ardent spirits than I have for—say vinegar."

Mr. Ray doesn't say vinegar, but smiles, and replies, "Not a bit."

"Well now, look at that. I know men who'd give a thousand pounds just now to have such a taste, or let me say, *distaste*. He's won a nice wife. Great Temperance body?"

"Of course she's an abstainer. But, besides that, she's a gem of a wife, Mr. Smirk. They're as happy as two larks, and as innocent of evil as two doves, in a way."

"And as wise as two serpents, I've a notion. Ah! sir, that's a grand thing; they'll find the bliss poets sing so much about. Most of my friends, no compliments to 'em, don't believe poets. They say happiness and love and innocence and such things are, in the main, moonshine. Money?"

"Oh, dear no! poor as a pauper." Mr. Smirk displays his eyeballs, and ejaculates sceptically,—

"Really! really!"

"Fact, sir."

"Blood?"

"Of course, though not in your sense of the word, that I'm aware of. Neither father nor mother. A poor orphan."

"Gained her position by sheer merit? Well, that's something. *She'd* need be thankful. Yes, if you please, I'll take a pipe. Widow Hudson holds on her way, doesn't she?"

"Very well."

"Now that's what I consider a case in point, Mr. Ray. A strong, sharp case, sir. It would suit any Temperance advocate. Half-mad, half-dead, half-ruined once! And now look at her! You still keep up an interest in that boy?"

"I do."

"Strange who he can be. Now, be candid, Mr. Ray. Don't you know?"

"Mind your own business, Mr. Smirk, and don't be inquisitive."

"Thank you. All right. No offence. How do Edward and Julia move along after their bargain?"

"Pretty well, taking into account Yates's difficulties. You

talk of struggles to resist the attractive force of the glass. I know of nought to equal Ned's. It has pulled like a whirlpool, and for months the lad has kept his energies braced up to the highest point, that he might defy it like a rock. He has sought to make a barrier between himself and it, of vows and penalties, pride and shame; a barrier that it would be hard to either scale or bear down. He has tasked his ingenuity to invent employments and recreations that would be likely counteractively to attract his mind, and engage time and thought and interest. He has attempted to make a hobby of farming; to find diversion in literature, amusement in authorship. To——"

"Really! All honour to him. How's he got on—succeeded or failed?"

"Sometimes one, sometimes the other. He'll be a temperate man in the end, I hope. But he's not yet fairly rooted. I wish he'd do as I did, Mr. Smirk, and what I know Julia has besought him to do: Seek the help that cometh from above. You remember what Paul says—'I can do all things, through——' "

"Yes, I remember. Ah! sir, as one gets on in life, and begins to see more and more clearly how that most things are empty as bubbles, and hardly more durable, it's natural to steal glances in that direction. It's so with me, Mr. Ray. I feel I'm getting on rather rapidly, and now and then I say to myself: 'Well, Smirk, and how do you mean to finish? The hour may soon be upon you, and you'd better make up your mind.' You've of course heard that Baker, the schoolmaster, has come to his end. You would know him?"

"Has he! Oh, yes, I knew him. That is, in a general way. And he's done?"

"Run his race, sir; or, rather, broken down in his race. Ah! a sad, sad case! Enough of itself to show the fearful evil of drinking."

"I suppose so. But I'm not acquainted with his history, Mr. Smirk."

"Aren't you? But I am, sir. I've the advantage of you there, anyhow. Once quite respectable. Lived in a good house, in a farming district, and was very steady. Came to Broadly to teach school. Was tempted by Ellis's bar-company to spend evenings there instead of at home. Yielded, neglected school, became confirmed drunkard, plunged headlong into debt, and drank all the harder to forget it. But it's over now, sir. Such scenes as I've witnessed! How he raved for gin! Some-

times I dashed his mixtures pretty freely with spirits of nitre, by way of compromise, and to see how he smacked and importuned for more was a sight to behold! I shall not soon forget his hollow cheeks and burning eyes and maniac mind. I sweat—or at least, *have* sweat, as I've thought of them. I was in at his death, sir. I wish I hadn't been. Oh, such a death! Didn't I resolve to be a temperate man as I stood beside his bed, and beheld the wreck which intemperance had made of him? There he was, begging most piteously for gin, brandy, rum, anything to help him to fight against the dragon, which his fiery brain told him was seeking to tear out his very life! Latin quotations, shrieks of horror, the terrible death-rattle, wild summonses for the waiter to hasten with gin! gin! gallons—rivers—oceans, to drown the leaping serpents of flame scorching him in every part, made up, I assure you, a tragedy which we were thankful to have closed even by death itself. The family reap as he has sown; and when I was there the other day they were completely destitute."

"Where do they reside? what is——"

"That's their address. Thank you, Mr. Ray. I was sure it would be enough just to name it. I shall be most happy to accompany you. You should hear that distracted, sorrow-stricken woman on the drinking system. She beats Noble hollow. It is awful, only one remembers what it has thrown into her lot. Ah, Mr. Arnold! How do you do, sir? How do you do?"

There enters with Arnold a tidy, roundly-shaped, sedate-looking lady, with a rather pale face, but bright eyes, that sparkle between two thick, black rows of long, glossy ringlets.

"I'm quite well, Mr. Smirk, and hope you are the same." He doesn't look well, though,—he is agitated.

"Thank you, thank you, remarkably passable," is the surgeon's reply.

"You've not heard from Harry to-day, maybe?"

Mr. Smirk's vivacity seems to have suddenly evaporated, for he answers slowly and thoughtfully:—

"No, not to-day." He appears about to add something for which Arnold listens eagerly, but it is turned into a sigh, a groan almost. His son has of late drunk hard, and in addition to blighting the father's hopes, has excited his gravest apprehensions.

"I fear all isn't as it should be," Arnold softly observes,



reluctant to pain the parent by any unfavourable intelligence respecting his offspring.

"What now?" Mr. Smirk asks sharply, with the manner of one accustomed to receive evil tidings, and mainly anxious as to their precise nature.

"A sad affliction has befallen them."

"Oh, Arnold! what is it?" The surgeon puts down his pipe. "Fire? Suicide? Murder? Tell me if you know!"

"None of these, I hope, Mr. Smirk. Jimmy's dead."

The announcement produces the silence of death. The entertainer and his guest look hard into each other's faces, as if hoping to read there further and full particulars. The news is not less sudden than sad. Mr. Ray breaks silence.

"How comes this, Arnold?"

"By special messenger, uncle. And we are all three desired to hasten down to Throng without delay. I've ordered the horse to be put in, and if you please we will be off as soon as he's ready. Poor Maud!"

Mr. Smirk stares abstractedly at the fire, his head resting heavily on his hand. Sundry fears which he had endeavoured to lull to sleep are suddenly aroused. For long months he has trembled for Harry. He has watched him with misgiving; received intelligence of him with suspicion. The reason is the young man's intemperate habits. The father knows that of late he has indulged to a fearful extent and neglected his calling; spent more time in imbibing ardent spirits than in compounding and distributing healing medicines; done more to render himself the fit companion of carousing comrades than the welcome adviser and helper of suffering patients. And the sting in those thoughts is the recollection that it was under his own roof and care, whilst the lad was taught to look up to him as his example and guide, that the liking for intoxicating drinks was formed, and the first links of the chain dragging him down to ruin were forged and fastened. Often and bitterly has Mr. Smirk reproached himself for being so unmindful of the training of his son. To the danger that threatens, he regards himself as having allured; the curse that he fears is descending, he doesn't doubt he has joined in invoking. The taste that hankers for stimulants he, in its first stages, fostered; and to the disgrace and degradation which his son appears to be fast approaching he rendered the path short and inviting. Agonizing thought! He wove and prepared the cord with which his eldest

born is fast strangling his health and interests, his happiness and hopes.

Though present in body, Mr. Smirk is absent in thought. He's away at Throng, asking—beseeching—to be told what has happened and how! who to blame and why! Looking about eagerly for what he wishes *not* to find—shame, disgrace, angry, ineffaceable traces of enormous iniquity, even crime!

“Ready, Mr. Smirk?” The inquiry startles the surgeon. He jumps to his feet, glances wildly around, and murmurs,—

“Ready, ready, did you say? Oh, yes! Yes—yes—yes, I'm ready, Arnold. Quite ready, sir.”

“Then we'll away, if you please, sir. Uncle will be down in a minute.”

“Have I been alone, my lad?”

“Alone, doctor? No doubt about it. Were you unaware of the fact?”

The doctor sighs. Poor Mr. Smirk! Not a bad man, but an erring father. And huge do his errors now appear! And fearful is the crushing weight with which they press upon him. As he staggers to the conveyance he thinks of parents amongst his acquaintance who have been bereaved of their offspring in childhood. Never has their grief appeared less reasonable; their losses less hard. Better, he thinks, bend in anguish over a lifeless infant, than be wrung with the follies of a living child. Better mourn them wrapped in their shroud, than covered with sin and shame; sleeping in some friendly burial-ground, than sinking into disgrace and crime. Rather would he now go to plant flowers on the little grave of a loved one than to the house of his eldest born, where a gigantic sorrow has fallen, a bolt, it may be, hot from the red right hand of retributive justice. So true is it that “a foolish son is the calamity of his father;” and that “he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.”

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## CHAPTER XV.

### A FEW HOMELY TRUTHS.

ARNOLD thus writes:—

“We were soon in Throng. Uncle and Mr. Smirk got down to enter by the front door, I took the horse and phaeton round to the back. The click of his shoes and the rumbling of the con-

veyance on the stone pavement brought Jukes, the servant-man, to my aid. Pointing a forefinger at a dilapidated cloth cap, which sat on his head close and snug as a wig, as if silently drawing my attention to some feature of its material, or make, he said, with considerable ease,—

“‘Glad you’ve come, Mr. Haworth; we’re in sad trouble here!’ He appeared, however, to be bearing up with more than commendable fortitude. He carried a suspicious flush in his face, and was somewhat unsteady in his gait.

“‘What has happened, Jukes?’ I asked, beginning to unfasten the harness. It wasn’t a practice with me to seek to obtain information from servants respecting the circumstances or conduct of their employers, but in this case I did it that I might be forewarned, remembering that he who is forewarned is forearmed.

“‘What has happened, sir? poor Jim’s dead, sir, which I takes as a individual and personal grief.’ He really *did* grieve, as was afterwards clearly and fully evinced.

“‘Poor little fellow! What’s he died of?’

“‘Died of? Croup, sir, so they *say*; choked clean up, and all in no time. His throat wadded like a gun with a charge.’

“‘Oh, dead, Jukes! It’s most distressing to think of.’ The image of the dear little boy, imploring help with his soft, blue eyes, and trembling, outstretched hands, and imploring it in vain, rose up before me in an instant.

“‘It is, sir, and would be hardly less distressing to endure. I some way find it difficult to believe that he *is* dead. Why, only yesterday he was dancing and spinning about in this very yard like a shuttlecock! Oh! I do wish it may teach somebody sense.’ He was leading away the horse; I followed to the stable, feeling it my duty to add a few moral reflections.

“‘We all need teaching, Jukes, and especially as regards the subject of death. We are prone to forget the brevity and uncertainty of life. Man that is——’

“‘I know’n’t if you need teaching at Prospect House, Mr. Haworth, but we need it here, sir. We need hard lessons; lessons that come home; lessons that have a rod about ’em. We’re all racing away here, sir, at the very top of our speed, right away, or wrong away, to destruction, and I’ve a notion we shall get there rather earlier than some of us are dreaming of.’

“‘Jukes!’ I said, in a tone meant to indicate that I spoke

reprovingly, 'don't trifle with such ideas as those you attach to the word destruction. I fear you're the worse for liquor.'

"I am, sir," he replied, with prompt frankness, 'and I hoped you'd note it, and be man enough to point it out, Mr. Haworth, and rate me soundly for it, and then I'd let you know a bit—a quarter, or so, perhaps—of my mind.'

"I don't understand you, Jukes."

"Very likely you don't, sir; but I'll mix up a few observations that you can't but understand. Let me tell you, then, sir, because I've a guess you don't know, and because I mean you to know, that we all drink here. Master drinks, missus drinks, what our old parson calls t' domestics drinks, I drinks, even old Crib, I do believe, drinks. We's all sailing merrily down, or was doing, a river of drink, to where—I coughed and shuffled about, to drown the close of the sentence. I looked keenly at him, no doubt; I was both annoyed and astonished. His eyes were rolling, and his face reflected the strange sheen of a wild excitement. 'There has been under that roof, sir,' he went on, 'for months, only one who hasn't drank. Only one who didn't touch aught worse than water and milk, and he's gone, where they drinks of the water of life freely and for ever! Yes, his mother, I'll say that for her, wouldn't let him take a drop! Not a drop! I've heard her say, when the father would have turned it into him, "No child of mine shall be brought up to love drink. I've seen enough of it. If we can't save ourselves, we'll not ruin him." I've heard, sir, sharp words pass between 'em on the subject. Very, very cutting words, that must have left gashes bleeding even yet. But what of it all?—*Example* was there, sir.'

"Jukes," I interposed, not intending to insult or offend him, but simply to convey the hint in a playful way, that I considered him a little unguarded in his manner of speaking of Doctor and Mrs. Smirk, even to a relation who was prepared to make every allowance. 'Jukes, what if I cause you to be indicted for defamation of character? You know—'

"Cause me to be indicted for what you like," he replied, with swaggering contempt, 'for *deaf*amation or *blind*amation! I can see and hear, and *must* speak out. I don't respect master enough to please you. Well, I can't help it, until he begins to respect himself!'

"But," I put in, 'as a gentleman, isn't he entitled to respect?'

“ ‘He isn’t a gentleman,’ he answered, with strange temerity. ‘Can a man be a gentleman who’s dead drunk three times a week? One may be unfortunate, and be a gentleman. Fail in business, and be a gentleman. Not have a penny in all the world, and yet be a gentleman. But not make a beast, a donkey, of himself every other day, and be a gentleman. No, no! *No drunkard is a gentleman.* Therefore I can’t look on one as such, or treat him as such. Why,’ Jukes went on, not using the following language, but reasoning in the following manner: ‘asking me to look on a drunkard as a gentleman, to believe him to be one, to behave myself towards him as such, is asking me to regard him as one thing whilst he is showing me that he’s altogether another. It’s like asking me to believe that a horseman, whom I see thrown every day, is a first-rate equestrian, just because people say he is. Or that the rifleman who misses the target nineteen times out of twenty is a first-class shot, just because he himself persists in declaring that he is. Or that a speaker, who stammers and flounders through a discourse, is a perfect orator, just because his family put him down for such before he was born. No, no, sir, it will——’

“ ‘But as your master,’ I began softly to remonstrate.

“ ‘As my master I can’t respect him, until he mends his ways. How can I? Could you, I should like to know, look up to a man in the morning whom you had rolled into bed dead drunk the previous night? I guess you couldn’t—no, no, sir. If a master would win the respect of his servants, he must be *sober at least*. Some masters seem to suppose that if they live in a great house, pay liberal wages, dress fine, and blow a gale through the whole establishment occasionally, they ought and will be sure to be respected, however they may drink. Ah! sir, gross deception; servants may fear ‘em and fawn to ‘em, for, like other eating creatures, they must live; but be sure of this, in their hearts they despise ‘em. I should like to tell all masters who’re in the habit of getting drunk, that not a surer method could they adopt of sinking right out of the range of all possibility of respect on the part of their servants. There’s the doctor, now; how can any of us here do less than despise him? You’ve hinted that he’s a gentleman. I take you to mean that he can put on refined manners, speak correctly, and dress *tastefully*; but what of these? They make up only half the man. *What’s the other half made up of?*—Sensuality, sir: and this is

the make and measure of hosts who pass for gentlemen. Gentlemen, indeed! I——'

"'Come, come, Jukes, I can't stay to hear you talk in this strain any longer. I think that if you have been expressing your convictions, and not trifling with me, you ought to quit the doctor's service.'

"'I ought, sir; and more, I mean to; and more yet, no more drunken masters for me!'

"'Allow me to observe, Jukes, that to be consistent, you yourself should be a sober man. Why don't you take the pledge?'

"'That's right, sir! Come to the point; now we shall make something out. Why don't I take the pledge? For this why, I suppose: because I'm the victim of the *hinstinct* o' procrastination, as old Richard says; I've nursed good intentions, like a fond, patient mother, for months. But somehow my intentions never get strong enough to walk. They're constitutionally rickety, as master would say.'

"'You jest, Jukes.'

"'Solemnly, I do not, Mr. Haworth. I now sit under Mr. Noble, and it begins to be clear that he'll move me to something good.'

"'Mr. Noble! I'm glad of that.'

"'So am I, sir. He's a man, is Mr. Noble; I worship him, and could do aught for him. And how was I led to go to hear him? He never asked me personally to do so. By his manner of nodding and smiling when I've passed him in the streets. Why, sir, a kind smile, a homely good morning, is worth a hundred tracts in drawing a poor man to hear you preach or lecture. You never——'

"'Now, my man,' I said, placing a hand on Jukes's shoulder, 'I must leave you; pardon me if I've said a word that has pained you. At once—this very night—become a thorough, practical abstainer. Yo'll never rue it; and give heed likewise to the other good things about which Mr. Noble can discourse so forcibly. Good night.'

"'Another word, sir, if you please.' I halted and inclined my head. 'Much obliged for your advice. Now, sir, talk to master, faithfully. His ways is ruining him, body, soul, and purse. He's softened by this sorrow, and maybe he'll heed you. If he'd become a sober master, I'd become a devoted servant. But I never will——'

"I promised him I would speak to the doctor if I should have an opportunity, and turned away, not relishing at all the scenes I anticipated I should witness."

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### A HEAVY SORROW.

"I DEALT a few timid taps at the kitchen-door; a staid and motherly matron opened it, and informed me, in an agitated whisper, that Mrs. Smirk wished to see me alone in her own room before I joined the gentlemen. It seemed a strangely altered house. So still, with the cold gloom of death within, upon, and about it; a silent fear had taken possession of its inmates. Death's sword had been suddenly unsheathed before them, and the terror it had inspired showed its sway in the furtive glances, frightened manner, and whispered words of the servants.

"Maud reclined on a couch, just visible in the dim light of the dull fire, with a white handkerchief spread over her face; she put out a hand, which grasped mine with unwonted warmth; for more than a minute it retained its hold, neither of us speaking a word. I felt a growing tremor running through it, which proved to be the precursor of a loud burst of most passionate grief. I do not remember what lame observation I made, but a distinct recollection of her reply and manner still lingers with me.

"'Thank you for coming, Arnold; I feared you might not consider me worth so much trouble.'

"'Worth so much trouble, Maud! If it were possible by a hundred such drives to relieve your deep sorrow, I'd promptly undertake them.'

"'Thanks, cousin, from my heart. This is a heavier blow than I ever expected would fall to my lot.'

"'No doubt it is, Maud; and it shows that life isn't shaped according to our expectations.' There was silence.

"'You were surprised when the news reached you, weren't you?'

"'Both surprised and shocked. It has been sudden, hasn't it?'

"'Oh, Arnold! Arnold! I can't survive this stroke; it will kill me.' Again from the inner depths of her sorrow a gushing

tide of tears and sobs and screams came welling up, and so spread itself over her person and manner, as to render her an object of deep pity.

"So you imagine," I observed softly. 'But you must try to bear up, cousin. The preservation of life is a duty.'

"But what is life to me? *Your's* is worth preserving; your days bring light and joy; mine, henceforth, will bring to me darkness and anguish. Indeed, I shall have no days, no light. Darkness—one continued night—will enfold my miserable being.' I thought that moment of the bitter trials of Job, and how that the words of one who has passed through deep sorrow will oftentimes express the feelings of another when fording its weary depths. 'My life is wind, mine eye shall no more see good. My soul chooseth strangling and death, rather than life. I loathe it; I would not live alway; my days are vanity. Oh, that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! For my days are past, my purposes are broken off, even thoughts of my heart.' Again there was silence.

"You ask," she observed, when she resumed, a little calmed, 'if it was sudden. Judge: he went to his crib well, apparently, last night. When our attention was drawn to him this morning—he slept in our room—he was in the agonies of death!'

"A fit?" She shook her head.

"Croup. He choked. How long he had struggled with it, or how they fought, we know not; for no eye but God's witnessed the——" Poor Maud! I could excuse her. It was a cutting thought for a mother to nurse, that her child had had to battle with a fatal ailment, with the grim enemy death, through the still watches of the night, all, all alone. No ministering hand to anticipate his little wants; to give him even a drop of water. No tears of friendly watchers to mingle with and warm the cold sweat of death. No mother's arm on which to pillow the reeking head, nor friendly bosom, with its soothing shelter, in which perhaps he had longed to nestle. No father's hand to part softly the flowing locks, press tenderly the beating brow, and by his manly sympathy give courage in 'the dark valley and shadow of death.' No voice to whisper of Jesus and heaven; no loving eye to beam peace and hope into his soul; nor solitary attendant to print on the parched, quivering lips affection's farewell kiss. In such crises manhood, even manhood associated with Divinity, desires the presence and



sympathy of others. 'What? could ye not watch with me one hour?'

"She requested—urged—me to accompany her to the room occupied by the corpse. I have still a lively recollection of her agitation, as she unlocked the door of the cold, still room, and glided with noiseless footstep to the snow-white heap, where reposed the sheeted sleeper. Being a parent, I can now better understand the feelings of a bereaved mother than then; yet I vividly remember pitying her from my very heart as she uncovered and gazed upon that round placid face, sleeping the long sleep of death.

"But in a few minutes amazement—horror—were mingled with my pity. I had just withdrawn my hand from the marble brow of the once promising boy, and was about to make what I trusted might prove a few soothing remarks, when she dropped down heavily on her knees, suddenly and passionately clasped the little form that had but so recently rejoiced in her caresses, and cried wildly, 'Murder! murder!'

"I was terrified. I begged her to hush, to leave the room, to exercise self-control; gently endeavouring at the same time to enforce obedience to my entreaties. But in vain. She was in a paroxysm of emotion—I feared, unconscious. Her arms were drawn tightly around the neck of the corpse; her lips pressed closely to its little face, as if she dreamt of breathing into it the breath of a second life; whilst her disordered hair had fallen thickly down, as though it sought to hide from my view, as too sacred for observation, some last sad token of bereaved affection.

"'Come, Maud,' I said, touching her shoulder, 'this will never do; you mustn't yield in this way; your behaviour is most strange!'

"'Murder!' she repeated, her voice partially smothered by close proximity to death. 'Murdered by this drinking, the sin of all sins, the curse of all curses! Oh, God, that it should have come to this! That he, the innocent, should be cut off, and we, the guilty, be spared! Is it that our cup of iniquity is not yet full? Oh, take me! Take me! that I may not treasure up more of wrath against the day of wrath!'

"I pulled her violently away, wiped and re-covered the little face that I almost marvelled didn't express astonishment, closed and locked the door, and conducted her back in a stupor of grief to her room.

"I sat beside her at least ten minutes without a word being spoken. I trembled. I felt somehow the near presence of fearful guilt—of crime. Her wild ravings were terribly ominous. She broke silence and, unsolicited, made, as to *substance*, the following statement:—

"‘Arnold, I must tell you the whole truth. I must do so, or my sin and shame will torment me all the more. For this purpose, partly, I have sent for you. You are aware Harry drinks hard. Indeed you have known this all along. You are not surprised at it, though too unselfish not to deplore it. But further, I drink, Arnold. That I might bear up in this otherwise intolerable home, I’ve had to avail myself of the help of the glass. God knows it, and now you have it from my own lips. I hate myself for it. But what was to be done? Long before yielding, I saw but too clearly that I must either blunt my sensibilities, or leave him. Perhaps I’m not yet hopelessly lost. Maybe I’m not yet the slave—the victim—of this drinking system. But more, cousin: last night Harry was drunk, dead-drunk, and that I might not see the depth of his degradation, nor feel how low I had sunk in becoming his wife, I—— Oh, Arnold! what shall I do? My scorching shame will wither, burn up, my life! I shall never be able to obtain forgiveness! Already is despair crushing me, and——’ she broke down here. Her agony was frightful.

"I understood her; saw it all, and an awful sight it was! In plain, concise, familiar phrase, both husband and wife, father and mother, were so stupefied by liquor, that they knew not their struggling child was ill, until help had become of no avail."

"But, *really*, you know," the sceptical reader throws in, "was it so? Is this a *bond fide* case? Could you give one the names of parents, child, or place?" Yes, and supply you with full particulars of perhaps a dozen nearly similar tragedies.

Arnold continues:—

"When the horror excited by my discovery had subsided a little, I felt that something should be said and done. The shock had served, as it were, to rouse me.

"‘Maud, Maud! God forgive you. I pray He may. Hope in His mercy. But there must indeed be a reformation. You and Harry must take the pledge, or you are ruined.’

"‘It’s no use talking, Arnold, and as little use trying. Harry *won’t*; he declares solemnly he *can’t* abstain.’

"'But have you tried to induce him to do so? Entreated him? Talked kindly, coaxingly, to him?'

"'Talked and tried! Twenty—ay, a hundred times! Haven't I seen enough of drunkenness to cause me to hate, to abhor it? Hasn't it driven my own father abroad? And isn't it fast dragging my brother into the very lowest deeps of infamy and wretchedness?'

"'You have seen enough, Maud,' I rejoined, in a softened tone, 'you have indeed. And I'm much pleased to hear you have attempted to make a stand. But you ought to have set Harry an example. That you've not done. Some one says that words without practice are but counsels without effect. And I——'

"'Arnold! you don't know what I've done. Don't be hasty to condemn. For months I've abstained. For months I've begged him to do so. But I've been driven to it again. You've happily no conception what it is to live with a drunkard, unless you drink. You——'

"'Nonsense, Maud! No one need be driven to drink. It's an idle excuse. Where there's a will there's a way.' I spoke sharply, more sharply than I ought to have done. 'Maybe it's well, if the intemperance of this house is incurable, that James has been taken. He's saved from the miseries of a drunkard's life.'

"'Arnold!'—she addressed me with considerable energy—'James would not have been a drunkard. This conviction is somehow firmly rooted in my mind. I've the consolation of believing that I was laying in him the foundation of a noble character. I kept from him intoxicating drinks entirely. Yes, thank God! I've the comfort of knowing that I did for him all a mother could do. Though not without effort, and firmness, and stratagem. But on that I'd fixed my heart; and do it I was resolved, or die in the attempt. And often, on a Sabbath evening, while his father, who ought to have been his protector and guide, has lain dead-drunk on this couch, have I stolen out to chapel with my boy, that I might create in him a liking for the worship of God and a reverence for religion, that so he might be a sober and pious man, an example to us and a comfort to me. How I'm rewarded, you know.'

"I was amazed, for a minute silenced. Then it was true what the servant-man had stated. True that the anxious mother had struggled, unhelped, coarsely opposed, to bring up her boy in the ways of sobriety and religion.

“ ‘Cousin,’ I said, ‘I am glad to hear this. Try again. Make a stand once more. Harry is surely softened by this heavy affliction, and will, perhaps, give heed to you.’ She closed her eyes and shook her head. ‘Don’t despair. Remember,’—how could she forget it?—‘that you have death in the house. Death in the form of one he loved. Surely in such presence he’ll be attentive and thoughtful, and disposed to listen, and vow, and perform!’ Again her head was shaken, her eyes remaining closed. It was the silence of utter despair.

“ ‘What,’ I resumed, ‘if uncle were to talk to him seriously, would—’

“ ‘No,’ she replied, with blunt promptness, ‘uncle Rowland had better let him alone. I trust he will: otherwise, he’ll deem himself insulted.’

“ ‘How so, Maud? What do you mean?’

“ ‘Not that he is aught less than a kind, worthy, upright man. I believe he is; but Harry is perverse enough to believe he isn’t, and, when in liquor, insolent enough to say so.’

“ ‘Tut, his insolence! What knows he wrong of uncle?’

“ ‘I’ll not affirm he knows more that’s wrong of uncle than we do, cousin. But this I’ll say: he knows more of his ways and movements. And somehow I can’t reconcile what he declares to be fact with what you and I know of uncle.’

“ ‘Declares to be fact! I watch uncle much more narrowly than Harry can, and I never——’

“ ‘You don’t see him when away in London, if you please, Arnold. Harry has seen him there, and so have his friends. And it’s there that he’s not just consistent with himself.’

“ ‘I pertinaciously asseverated that I was sure uncle would be consistent with himself anywhere and everywhere; nevertheless, I became hot, fidgety, and very unhappy. What can it mean? I demanded of myself. What have Harry and his friends discovered? Am I deceived in uncle Ray? Is he a grand impostor? Is there ground for these insinuations? No, there’s not, I replied. I spurned the suspicion indignantly. Alas! what a difficult book to read is this Human Nature!’

“ ‘Then if Harry will hear no reason, take no advice; if he will destroy himself, we may as well let him alone.’

“ ‘Let him alone at present. This I hope your uncle is doing. If not, I’ll venture to say he’s at this moment in a very ruffled state of mind.’

“ ‘I made no reply, for there were audible signs of a movement

in the passage to our room-door, and resulted in the entrance of Mr. Smirk, uncle, and Harry. The last-named was hot and flushed, and appeared to find great difficulty in steering himself to a chair. His father and uncle carried a mixture of chagrin and sadness in their faces. Few words were exchanged, for none of us appeared in any mood for conversation. I felt we were a dismal company, fettered, rather than united, by our ties of kindred; owning too many repelling points to allow of any concord; a company brought together by a melancholy tragedy, not drawn by the attraction of mutual respect.

"Uncle offered no advice. His silence puzzled, but at the same time relieved me. I had believed his convictions on the subject of drinking sufficiently strong to move him to speak out, and his interest in Maud and solicitude for Harry's welfare lively enough to lead him to address to them wise and earnest counsels. Hence, although glad that he didn't speak, I couldn't forbear revolving the question, '*Why* doesn't he speak?' I revolved it during that dreary sitting—on our way home—after reaching home. Before we separated, however, for the night, my inquiry was answered. He had attempted that evening, before they joined Maud and myself, to improve what he called 'the occasion.' The result was the one foretold by counsel. Harry had replied with gross insult and vile insinuations. These had cut deeply into uncle's heart.

" 'Arnold,' he added, looking earnestly and anxiously into my face, 'my conduct in London, since my reformation at least, will bear, I trust, the scrutiny of the great Judge of all. Would that Harry Smirk frequented those haunts with no impurer motives than mine! Would that he were actuated by a wish to—but wait, my lad. I may yet, when a proper time comes, disclose to you all. In the meantime confide and hope, and above all, exercise charity. Faith, Hope, and Charity, Arnold. These three. But, remember, the *greatest* of these is Charity. Good night, my boy, good night!'"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### MORE TROUBLES.

Six months have elapsed since the occurrence of the sad event which forms the subject of the last chapter. It is a beautiful July evening, Arnold and his young wife are pacing leisurely

the garden-walks. Mr. Rowland Ray is all alone in his room, and somewhat sad. The cause of his sadness is the removal of his boy to the institution whence he was brought to Mrs. Hudson's. This step he has seen it his duty to take, although his parental instinct rebelled violently against it. In taking it he has sought, not the concealment of the child's paternity, but his good.

The garden-door opens, and lets in the sound of two voices. Arnold turns round, and a glad surprise spreads over his face. He hastens to welcome the Rev. Mr. Noble and Mr. Smirk, surgeon. The latter replies,—

"Thank you, Arnold. Thank you, sir; glad to see *you*. Ah! how do you do, Mrs. Haworth? Well, I see. Why did I ask?"

Mr. Smirk throws a faint liveliness into his manner. But Arnold surmises that in spirit he is not lively, for he notes a slight tremor in his voice, a twitch in the corners of his mouth, and a glistening moisture in his eye.

"Your uncle in?"

"Yes, he's—no he's not, Mr. Smirk, for here he comes." Mr. Ray has heard the voices, and is already on the front step.

"Ah, my dear sir! Noble and I intrude again, you see. Intrude again." He sighs. It might be that they are driven by some imperious necessity, much against their own inclinations, to force themselves into the society of Mr. Ray.

"Don't name it. Always glad to see you, doctor, and our friend here." He shakes Mr. Noble's hand warmly. "Walk in, pray do."

"Thank you. Five minutes here, if you please. How charming is this!"

He looks around—above—at the declining sun—the company—garden—house, and then droops his head, allowing something very much like a groan to escape him. Mr. Ray notes it, and says cheerfully,—

"Will you stroll, doctor?"

"Thank you."

They turn into a gravelled walk, bordered with strawberry plants. Discussing the flavour of the fruit, and plucking up a few weeds, they reach the stone wall, and lean against it. Mr. Noble, Arnold, and Felicia are conversing in a group.

"What a happy pair you have there, Mr. Ray!"

"In Arnold and his wife?"

"The same."

"Yon setting sun isn't leaving behind him a happier couple, doctor. So content with their home, and so satisfied with each other." Again Mr. Smirk sighs.

As if in corroboration of Mr. Ray's affirmation, there rises from the group a ringing peal of laughter, of which it is clear Felicia is the author. The surgeon is neither misanthropical, nor censurably envious; and yet that honest, healthy laugh, smacking so of innocence and love and happiness, cuts him to the quick. They cluster about some object on the grass. Mrs. Arnold playfully yelps out a few interjections, expressive of timidity and alarm, and seizes one of her husband's hands. Mr. Ray is earnestly entreated to join them, and Mr. Smirk for a few minutes is left alone. He takes particular note of Felicia's fond clinging to Arnold.

"Yon setting sun isn't leaving behind him a happier couple," he slowly repeats to himself. "I believe he isn't. Yon setting sun!"

He turns round, rests an elbow on the wall, his face on his hand, and watches the glowing globe of fire, as silently and slowly it departs to light up other lands. He muses; wonders from how many aching eyes and brows, and weary heads, he is withdrawing his light. How many homes there are, wrapped in a darkness which his rising on the morrow will be unable to chase away! If there are any fathers like himself, wishing that the sun of their life were setting, and that they were descending into the coveted rest and forgetfulness of the grave! Whether the lands to which he is so silently travelling contain broken hearts, sorrowing parents, rebellious sons! A shout rouses him, and he turns to look at the group. A toddling figure in white, like a tiny apparition, is bearing down unsteadily upon them; a fluttering nurse, with outstretched arms, hovering near, like a guardian angel. It is hailed with a chorus of endearments; an uncle, father, and mother, each, in honeyed phrase and with extended arms, eagerly beseeches to be selected as the favoured one. Arnold, unable longer to restrain his paternal fondness, jumps to the front, snatches up the child, tosses it above his head, and receives it with a hug of wild delight.

Mr. Smirk restores his beating head to his open hand, and with difficulty keeps back a hot flow of tears. He is troubled by strong, sharp contrasts. He cannot help opposing to the happy couple before him a drunken, churlish husband, and a chafed, miserable wife, with whom he has the misfortune to be

acquainted. The discord in which he knows them to have lived sounds doubly harsh to memory's ear in presence of the harmony prevailing in that garden. The cherub, white as drifted snow, so cared for and caressed, calls up the cold image of a sheeted boy, deserted in the hour of his dread extremity, and given up to cruel death by those who gave him life. The home before him, so neat, and warm, and inviting, so fitted to quicken the returning feet of those who share its bliss, throws into dark, deep, terrible shade the domestic strife and cursing, recrimination and intemperance, in which Harry and Maud have dragged on an existence that has known little of the light of hope, and less of the transports of love and joy.

"And what has been the cause of this miserable existence?" he asks himself. "Why are Maud and Harry less happy than those young people? What has clouded with such darkness and failure and woe, lives that might have been a brilliant success? Oh, God! I've but one answer—Drink! drink! drink!"

"Mr. Smirk, come in. Are you ill?" This is Mr. Ray.

"Ill? I—oh! thank you, thank you, Ray. Where's the company?"

"Fled from the night dews, as I wish you to do."

"The night dews? Oh, yes, oh, yes, of course. May I be allowed the privilege of a friend, my dear sir?" Mr. Ray replies, "Certainly, certainly," as the surgeon takes his arm. "Pardon," Mr. Smirk continues, "the weakness I'm this evening manifesting. I'm ashamed to be so depressed and unhappy, but somehow I feel as if a mountain were on me."

"What's amiss, doctor?"

"An unusually heavy trial has befallen me, sir. So heavy, that I fear I shall sink under it."

"Nonsense; what is it?"

"No nonsense; would it were."

"Well?" Mr. Ray halts, and looks searchingly at the surgeon.

"This is it, sir, in few words: Harry has brought on himself indelible disgrace and ruined his father, and Maud has disappeared, when or how, we know not. The house is shut up, with no prospect of ever being re-opened by them."

Mr. Ray stands like one riveted to the ground, and stares as he might have done if Mr. Smirk had begun there and then to amputate one of his own limbs.



"Indelible disgrace—ruin—disappearance! These are strong words, doctor."

"No stronger than true, sir. Since the death of the boy, both have recklessly sought for a refuge from remorseful recollections and stinging shame in intoxication. And this is the end. Something like what I feared. Of Harry's whereabouts I've an inkling; of Maud's none. You talk of drunkenness, sir! you curse drinking! see how I might talk!—how I might curse!"

"Oh, doctor! doctor!" Mr. Ray exclaims in an agony, "we shall have our grey hairs brought with sorrow to the grave! Whither can Maud have fled?" London flashes into his thoughts. Pearson is there, picking up in the lowest scenes of dissipation and wretchedness the bitter support of a hated existence. She may seek him out, for they have corresponded. And what then? A shudder of cold horror shoots through each nerve and fibre as he mentally scans the bare margin of that world of temptation in which she would find herself inextricably engulfed.

"My dear sir," he says, stepping back to the doctor, grasping his hand, and speaking with the quiver of intense emotion in his voice (he had stridden to the top of the walk in his restless agitation), "my dear sir, I pity you. I do indeed. This is no common trial; no ordinary grief. But bear up. Try to do so. Seek the help that cometh not of mortals. You are not alone in trouble. Look around: multitudes struggle with you in its deep waters. I'm with you. Ah! sir, I've been in the swellings of that Jordan many years. I know what it is to groan through the long day, and to keep sleepless watch with the stars. To wish that it were night, and to be full of tossings to and fro until the dawn. To rise with my cross, and sighingly fling it on to my weary shoulder. To carry it into society—the sanctuary—retirement. Maybe you think it a light cross, because I can laugh and entertain friends, converse and dispute, throw my heart apparently into travel, and enjoy my home. Ah! sir, it all shows we know not one another. I can do it because familiar with it, because self-educated to mask my feelings and hide my cares. In this respect learn of me, sir; although a poor, miserable, erring mortal, deeply soiled with the mire of wayward, wicked wanderings. Now cheer up, doctor, and to-morrow we will look into this. But here comes Arnold. Say nothing more at present."

He has come out to urge them to go in. The subject is dropped, and they sit down to supper. Mr. Noble, Arnold, Mrs. Ray, and Felicia, are lively and talkative. Mr. Smirk, however, in spite of himself, is gloomy and abstracted; and Rowland, were he to yield to his humour, would be thoughtful and taciturn.

But what now? Why that instant change in the uncle's manner? That sucking in of the under lip? That ill-concealed agitation? And what mean those uneasy glances which pass between Arnold and his wife? The servant is pronouncing a name, and the owner of the name is importuning her, in an audible voice meant to be inaudible, not to trouble her master at present. The visitor is Mrs. Hudson. Mr. Ray rises, begs them to excuse him, and steps out to the widow, whom he is glad to see. They betake themselves to a small room, and are soon in earnest dialogue. Martha is returning from a long journey. When hosts of questions have been put and answered having reference to her children, her home, farm, and so on, Mr. Ray says, looking earnestly and anxiously at her,—

"Well?" She shakes her head, and replies feelingly,—

"No improvement, sir."

"None?" he asks wildly.

"Mr. Ray, I have been particularly requested by Mr. Goodman to inform you, that in his opinion there is less hope than formerly. Less, much less, than when you were there last. Wilder and wilder! Darker and darker!"

Mr. Ray's head falls on to his arms resting on the table, and his chest and shoulders heave as if worked by violent feeling.

"They are very kind, sir. All is being done that money, skill, and sympathy can do."

"I don't doubt that. But I want light and reason to return, Mrs. Hudson, that there may be repentance and mutual forgiveness and reparation."

"Of course you do, and I share your wish. And hope, sir; whilst there's life there's hope. It may be only a slight relapse."

"I fear there's little ground for hope, Martha. The light seems going out. It's not an obscuration of the sun by cloud. It's a setting, a going down, with no prospect of a rising on the morrow. And what a night for me will follow! Follow? it's commenced already. It's night, somehow, before sunset! Wretched here! And what will be my fate hereafter?"

"Don't talk about your wretchedness! Why should you be miserable here? And why fear the future? If you tremble to meet your Judge, such as I have cause to quake. How did you leave the boy?"

"Oh, all right. He'll be much better there than here."

"Much better. But it will be a trial when I reach home. I shall feel lonely without him. It will be as if we'd buried him."

"Ah! well, one mustn't yield too much. We must look at our mercies, and think of others, Martha. Heard of poor Smirk's trouble?"

"Yes, in Throng."

"What's Harry done?"

"Done? Don't you know?"

"No."

"Enough to blacken his name for ever. And, besides that, he's robbed his own father."

"Dear, dear! Poor Maud! You've heard of her disappearance?"

"I should think so. I found that the news had been blazed through the whole town."

"What do you suppose has become of her? Whither has she gone?"

"If she's not destroyed herself, she's gone to Pearson."

"Destroyed herself? You don't think that possible?"

"*Quite*, sir. When I stayed with them after that poor boy's death, I soon found out that she was tired of life, and that her thoughts were running on suicide. She didn't say so, but I somehow picked it out."

Suicide! Mr. Ray's thoughts are thrown back to a period of his life which he would like, on some accounts, to forget. A period when *he* was heartily tired of existence. When it was a burden he hated. When, as he dragged his weary body along, he sighed for deliverance from its bondage. A period when he longed for the falling of that cold darkness which shuts out the world for ever.

"But I do hope, Martha, she's not committed such an awful sin. London before that. What a time she must have had!"

"Time! ay, such a time as you've no notion of. A pretty cat-and-dog life. And oh, sir! they had but sunk, sunk, sunk! I used to think drunkenness a hateful thing, linked to poverty. And so it is. But not by a long way so hateful as in alliance

with what is called respectability. What a loathsome curse in that grand house! How detestable, staggering in the harness of their fine ways!"

Right, Mrs. Hudson. Quite right. Intoxication, wearing a begrimed face, covered with rags, shaking a horny fist, is much less disgusting than when reeling in gilded apartments, blaspheming with a refined enunciation, or rolling on mossy carpets, jewelled and senseless. Shame to the mechanic who can so far forget what is due to himself as a man, as to drink until he is fain to make a bed of the miry gutter. But oh! hotter, keener, should be his sense of shame who can make a beast of himself amid the refining adornments of art and cultivated society, and in spite of the elevating influences of education. To whom much is given, of the same much is in fairness and justice required.

"Well, I'll cause inquiry to be made for Maud, and in the meantime do what I can to comfort this scapegrace's spirit-broken father. I'll not detain you longer, Martha, as you are no doubt anxious to see the children. Maybe I shall be up early to-morrow to hear all particulars. You won't divulge my secrets, will you? Thank you. And I hope you don't think I'm doing wrong? Thank you again, Martha. Oh, that I may not be condemned by the Searcher of all hearts! That, after all, should be our chief solicitude. Morning, noon, and night, this is my prayer: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!' Good night."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### ARNOLD IN LONDON.

Soon as Mr. Ray was alone with his nephew and niece, he made them acquainted with the surgeon's heavy trouble. Felicia received the sad intelligence with trembling horror; Arnold with a mixture of pity and indignation, Maud being the object of the former, and Harry the exciting cause of the latter.

He resolved to attempt to save his cousin. He loved her sincerely even in her fallen condition. To London he was sure she would go; the supposition of suicide he rejected.

For a fortnight business compelled him to curb his impatience to follow in pursuit. At length, one hot morning in early August, he and Gilbert started for the metropolis. They had been wisely counselled by Mr. Ray, and were fervently prayed for by Felicia. Arnold thus writes :—

“ Being furnished with what had once been Pearson’s address, we hied thither at once. It was a low, narrow, crowded street, so unfavourable in appearance to health and happiness, that it was to us a marvel how life could be sustained there at all. A short, sallow, cunningly-suspicious, old man informed us that he had once been disgraced by such a lodger, but had fortunately got rid of him; he hinted, however, that he should be most happy to allow himself to be bribed out of a clue, which he hoped would secure for Pearson the solemn considerations of judge and jury, and the delicate attentions of the hangman. This didn’t seem to be the expression of any vindictive feeling. It was meant simply as a touch of pleasantry, intended to make just bearable the transaction of so stale a bit of business as the exchanging of an address and a silver coin.

“ Our second attempt was successful, but Pearson was not in. His lodging was a greasy, dirty, suspicious-looking house, from which we both recoiled with disgust. We called again, when a message was sent down which was savagely delivered, the burden of which was, a demand to know who wanted to see him. We sent up our names, the reply to which was, that he would see me the following evening alone. On this condition, and on no other, would he grant an interview.

“ To this condition Gilbert at first very strongly objected; he had formed the resolution that nothing should part us in London. Felicia had to do, I found out, with the forming of that resolution; she feared I might fall into some trap if we were separated; be robbed, even murdered. The vast town stood out to her imagination a horrible place! A place in which were cunningly-concealed secret courts, where were mysterious cellars, splashed with blood and human gore, whose black, damp walls and mouldy roofs shut in nightly scenes of robbery and murder! Where were endless dark passages, in which armed thieves and assassins, fierce and strong, ambushed to deal instant death on such unwary victims as happened to be allured into them. Where houses were built and rooms constructed and traps laid to entice and ensnare, plunder and ruin, innocent and unsuspecting strangers, such as she no doubt believed me to be! Gilbert

maintained that to meet Pearson alone would be an unwise step, a reckless venture. I was determined, however, to persevere.

"On giving my name, I was cautiously admitted, and conducted up a flight of steps to a small, dingy room, containing one solitary occupant; he was a young man, and lay stretched on a worn, greasy couch, prostrated perhaps by the heat, perhaps by the previous night's, or rather that morning's, debauch. I 'begged pardon,' and asked if Pearson Ray were in; he groaned, rolled over, waspishly cursed both me and my question, and then tried to become oblivious of both insult and intrusion. I sat down; what a home, or lodging, in which to exist! I thought of Prospect House—of Felicia—the child—uncle Ray—grandmother—garden. Our pure air, charming prospects, bright skies, exhilarating mornings and tranquil evenings, and then wondered how, by any device, stimulants, desperate resolves, or iron necessities, human beings managed to maintain life in such a stifling, unwholesome abode. I thought, too, what a different home Pearson might have had, had he been a sober lad.

"My meditations were soon interrupted by the arrival of two cadaverous-looking youths, in a state of hilarity that ill comported with their sickly appearance. They accosted me with a very disagreeable sort of freemasonry, and attempted to rouse the dozing churl on the couch, in a way that savoured much more of familiarity than politeness. Others joined them, and, emboldened by numbers, they opened on me a galling fire of raillery, abuse, and insinuation, to which I found it difficult not to reply. They even went farther; but fortunately, before they had taken many steps in this direction, Pearson made his appearance, sadly worn and jaded, as if by dissipation, and cajoled them into something like a tolerant mood. I intimated my wish for a private interview.

"'And what is it, Arnold?' he asked, when we were alone in another room, vainly striving to conceal his emotion. 'For what do you seek this interview?'

"'Oh Pearson! Pearson! that it should come to——'

"'Now, Arnold!' he ferociously exclaimed, 'no preaching! I'll not stand it! not for a minute! you're taking your way in life, and I'm taking mine. I let you go *your* way, and I'll not have any pious exhortations about mine!'

"'Way in life!' I repeated. I confess I spoke with much

energy, and it may be with scorn, for I was not a little moved. 'And a grand way of life it is! Oh, cousin! I'm ashamed! astonished at——'

"Do you hear me, hypocrite! not another word of reproof or censure! If you persist, I'll set yqn hounds on you, who'd as soon club your life out as not! It's enough, surely, that you've cut me deeply, without coming here to inflame my wounds with your vitriol-talk!"

"Cut you deeply, Pearson! what do you mean? It's unkind in you so speaking to one who has never sought in any way to injure you!"

"Sought to injure me!—you have, and succeeded too."

"How?—when?"

"How?—by turning uncle Rowland against me. You've all cast me off, down into the mire, and now you want to be allowed to pity me, and talk piously to me! No, no! let me alone! I've chosen my way, and I'll go on, whatsoever the end may be. Say it will be early destruction! The earlier the better! Now you know my mind!"

"Pearson, I've not turned uncle Ray against you. I've never——"

"Very well. Just don't talk about it. What want you with me?"

"To learn something from you respecting Maud."

"What?"

"All you know."

"Then you're on a bootless errand, for I shall not tell you."

"Do you know where she is?"

"Yes."

"Sure?"

"I knew this morning."

"Is she here?"

"No."

"In London?"

"Yes."

"In what part?—what's her address?"

"Not so fast, Arnold, if you please. Why these questions? What's your motive?—disclose that. She's left Harry. I know all about that. And she's done right. She'd have deserved whipping through Throng if she'd remained with him another day. So if your aim be to roast her for running away, I've not another word to say on the subject. You are at liberty to

leave these premises at once, which I've no doubt are more than sufficiently seasoned with wine and spirits to suit your fastidious taste.'

" 'Pearson, my errand isn't to censure, or upbraid. It is to induce her to return, not to Harry, but to us—to uncle Gilbert, to anybody she may like, so that we can but get her from this Sodom.'

" 'Really, though?'

" 'Of course. It's too serious a matter for badinage.'

" 'You're right, cousin,' he replied with animation. 'And won't you be for ever making her miserable?—for ever reminding her of what she's done and been?' I assured him we would not, but would do our best to make her happy.

" 'Then I'm yours to help at once, my lad, if you'll come down pretty strong with the needful.' I promised to do so.

" 'She's gratified no wish of mine in coming here,' he went on; 'I've neither home nor society fit for her, nor the means to help her. If she abides in this place she's ruined, I begin to see that. Indeed I can't endure the thought, bad as I am, of what I fear she may come to. She'll be thrown amongst villains—is amongst them—who've neither heart, conscience, nor reason; who care for neither God nor man; who may sink, who may swim; who cries, or who curses, if so be that they can get their glass and carouse away their senses. I hate them, and myself too, and all my ways, and even life, and if you'll be her friend and mine, cousin, I'll take you to her to-night.'

" I gave him money—a sum that astonished him—and after a little delay we sallied out. He called a cab, whispered earnestly to the driver, and then commanded me to 'in.' We set off at a rattling pace, which was kept up for half an hour at least. What with lights, shops, turnings and vehicles, I was quite bewildered, and have no idea, even now, at this somewhat distant date, to what part of the city we were whirled. I remember we stepped from the cab into a sombre yard, on each side of which high, dark walls towered up, whose blackness seemed to be made all the more striking by a few feeble lights here and there. Pearson pushed me along a narrow passage into a hot room, where was a motley, but not at all noisy, company. The disagreeable conviction was forced upon me that I was in a London house, of not the highest repute. He bade me be seated, and then left me. In five minutes he returned, and whispered that we were too soon. He ordered



brandy, and drank off at once half the measure of a large tumbler, slightly let down with water.

“‘There!’ he said, smacking his lips, ‘I shall feel alive after a dozen like that. One needs to be awake and alive here, cousin. Look to your purse, for there are gentlemen here who live by their wits.’

“‘Do you expect Maud to meet you here?’

“‘Not in this room. I expect she’ll be under this roof before morning.’

“‘Under this roof before morning!’ I repeated to myself. How bitter was the reflection! Maud, once so fair, beautiful, innocent, in such a polluted and polluting atmosphere as that! How she had fallen—sunk! I saw her far down in a loathsome degradation, and recoiled from her in disgust. Poor cousin! I did thee an injustice during those long moments of torturing suspense.

“Pearson again returned, having left me a second time. In obedience to a hint, I rose and followed him to another part of the house. We entered a large and brilliantly-illuminated room, containing loungers in various stages, as I afterwards discovered, of intoxication. The room was amply furnished with couches, chairs, tables, and mirrors. At one end there was a slightly-raised platform, that supported a massive piano. I was in a music saloon—in the real presence of one of those vilest perversions of the precious blessings of Heaven which a depraved ingenuity has yet invented.

“When the company had become numerous, and the wine and spirits were circulating freely, and the steaming fumes, and flaring gaslight, and mingled torrent of talk were striking the senses of the carousers with bewilderment, there arose above the chorus of voices and jingling of spoons and glasses, unsteadily enunciated demands for songs and music. Pearson became silent. I looked into his face: he was pale as death, but in his restless eye there was the excitement of throbbing life. A minute more, and I understood it all. A small side-door opened, and four females appeared on the platform. One of them sat down to the instrument. She was Maud, smiling and beautiful. To describe my feelings would be utterly impossible, were I to make the most laboured attempt. I should have to describe joy at having found her, toned down by the regret at having found her at such a place. Thankfulness that she was there in the capacity of musical performer only, with its warmth cooled by the chilling know-

ledge of the character of her audience. Hope of recovering and saving her, which sprang up strong and vigorous, checked and borne down by the fear that she might see a livelihood sufficiently ample and tempting in the calling into which she was being initiated. For Maud had a fine ear and a correct taste for music, and could strike the keys of a piano with thrilling effect, as she did that night. It was a varied but not long performance, and her part of it was marked in many ways as specially excellent. The drunken auditory was at times in raptures, and thundered out its intoxicated applause as she rose and bowed them 'good night.'

" 'Arnold,' Pearson said fiercely, ere the uproar had subsided, 'now's our time. I like this no more than you do, although I own to having helped her to this engagement. They think it very grand. And to them it may be; but to me it isn't. I've sat here for the first time when she's played, and it'll be the last. Heard you the remarks of those drunken brutes?' I had heard, and even singled out, some very offensive jokes in which a group of 'gentlemen' just behind us had indulged. 'If I can have my way they've seen her here for the last time. I've heard such observations about other girls, and have thought them perhaps very clever, but somehow they don't sound at all so when the subject of them happens to be one's own sister. And yet most females are the sisters of somebody.'

"Right, Pearson, right! But how slow are your villanous robbers of female virtue and chastity and peace, in getting at this fact! How many, alas! never reach it at all!

"By this time we were entering another apartment, in which Pearson expected to find his sister. It likewise contained company; more select and respectable, in a certain sense, than the noisy throng we had left, but not less under the dominion of the demon of intoxication.

" 'Sit down there.' He pushed me into a chair, and erecting his head, and dashing his bearing with assurance, marched up to a female form reclining on a sofa. He seemed more of a man than I had ever known him. There was a determination in his voice, a decision in his air, a firmness in his step, which my heart then and there accepted as an atonement for many minor faults. The female form was, of course, Maud's. He sat down beside her, and they were soon in earnest conversation. So earnest and so unpalatable to certain jewelled and whiskered on-lookers, that one of them presumed to go up to them, and to reprove

Pearson for his unwarrantable liberties. It delighted me to see her promptly decline his proffered services—resent his interference as an insult.

"I watched them closely. Obviously Pearson was both earnest and serious. He saw some great danger, and sought to turn her from it. Some peril that must have been suddenly unmasked, the sight of which tortured him with apprehension. She bent her head down to Pearson's cheek, then turned an ashy face to the part of the room where I sat, and peered at me with pensive eagerness. A signal was given, and I joined them. Poor cousin! I feared she would shriek right out, from sheer, excruciating heart-pain, as she held my hand. When I could command utterance, I begged, importuned—which I found was what her brother had done—that she would return with me. I offered every inducement that occurred to me, and made the most of my poor arts of suasion. I dwelt on the quiet and safety of the country; the turmoil and dangers of the town. Our deep grief at losing her; our readiness to receive and help her.

"'Pearson, leave us a minute. Arnold,' she continued, 'oh, Arnold! The deep, deep trouble I've had of late! Enough to drive me to self-destruction, which I've more than once meditated. Where's Harry? I cannot come to him. He's used me cruelly.'

"I answered that of Harry I knew nothing; that we didn't wish her to return to him; that we would help her in any way, and do our best to make her happy.

"'Thank you. But how can I come back to Throng? I cannot.'

"'Cannot! But how can you live here? You are ruined if you remain.'

"'Live here! I don't mean to try. I'll be candid, Arnold. I don't intend remaining a day longer than may appear necessary. Lead this life, indeed! I wouldn't for a million a year! When Pearson first wrote about it, I thought it the life that would suit me best. I hankered for excitement. You know, Arnold!—poor girl!—there's much in my unhappy history that I naturally wish to forget. Here I hoped to bury it! But no grave can hold it. Each morning it rises and confronts me, darker and darker! More and more terrible! Oh, that a merciful God would come to my help and rescue!'

"'Is it money you want, Maud? Because, if it is, uncle and I—'

“‘Thank you, Arnold. Thank you. How is uncle Ray?’ I replied that he was as usual.

“‘What,’ she resumed, with a touch of ghastly pleasantry, ‘if uncle and I meet some of these nights in this London, Arnold? That would be queer, wouldn’t it? Meet, you know, in such a place as this!’

“‘Come, Maud,’ I answered, ‘no foolish jesting. Let us come to some understanding, and get away from this horrid place.’

“‘Foolish jesting! Ah, ah, ah! Arnold! you don’t know everything, that’s quite clear.’ Suddenly she changed her manner, and whispered—she was ominously and horribly serious—‘I feel for you and Felicia, cousin. I do, *really*. But as for uncle Rowland—well, I’ll only say this at present, and not to pain, only to prepare you—that I’m expecting an exposure some day *which will cover you all at Prospect House with shame*. Mark my words. Oh, Arnold, this drinking! I’ve seen since I came to this town what a thousand nobles could never have made me believe! As sure as I now talk to you I shall become an abstainer. The abominably hateful and unrelatable evils of the system will fill me with indignation against it. I feel it rising within me like a tide. A curse! Oh, what a curse! What a curse!’ She covered her face and wept bitterly.

“‘Come,’ I said, when her feelings had subsided a little, ‘what is it? Tell me! Tell me now! Tell all! What know you that’s not upright and straightforward about uncle? You surely don’t mean that he visits such places as this Pandemonium when he comes to London? Your insinuations will worry my heart out if not explained. I can’t endure them.’

“‘Ask Pearson; ask Pearson, he knows!’ Her brother had joined us, unperceived by me.

“‘What is it?’ he demanded savagely. ‘What have you been spurting out, simpleton? You’d no right to name it. Are you going to leave here, or aren’t you?’

“I looked up into his face. It was dyed with a crimson flush. His rolling eyes were shooting hot shafts of rage, and his lips and fists were quivering, as if surcharged with the direst fury.

“‘Gently, Pearson,’ I said. I was afraid Maud might become obstinate. I knew she scorned to be driven.

“‘Gently, indeed!’ he replied, in a tone of haughty disdain. ‘And that’s you, is it? and after all your swelling pretensions,

too! There's not a better amongst you! Maud! are you moving?' He quite fumed.

"'Get out, stupid!' she contemptuously answered, tossing away her head. A cloud of indignation settled on her face. It was just what a minute before I feared. He had locked the wheel which I had been trying by sundry oily arts to move. Unfortunately, a gentleman (?) came up at this juncture, and asked if he might order wine for Mrs. Smirk.

"'No!' was Pearson's prompt, ill-advised, and provoking reply.

"'Who invited your impertinence, bore?' was the sharp, coarse, and exasperating rejoinder. Pearson quickly returned the fire, which only called forth another discharge, heavier and more galling than the preceding.

"I saw we were in for a storm, which, to me, was a most disagreeable look-out. Clouds were accumulating with sooty blackness, white breakers freckling the troubled prospect on every hand, and even the ominous wail and sigh of wind, which often precede a wild dance of nature's elements, as if her energies felt painfully the rising strain upon them, had their parallels in the muttered imprecations and threats of the inebriates who had gathered around us.

"'What is it?' demanded a bystander.

"'She's my sister, and this gentleman's cousin, and we insist on her leaving at once, and with us.'

"'Ho! ho!' was raised by three or four voices, the owners of which seemed vastly amused that Pearson should claim any protectorate over his sister. It was, of course, the very height of presumption and the acme of the ridiculous.

"'Come, clear a space, gentlemen, if you please,' he called out.

"'What for?' some one asked.

"'For my pleasure. A conveyance is waiting, so take my arm, Maud.'

"Before he had quite finished the sentence, a noisy hubbub was commenced, and we were rudely elbowed from the vicinity of the sofa. I attempted an energetic remonstrance. Pearson grew furious as an enraged bull-dog. My remonstrance was a feather interposed to arrest a roaring flood; Pearson's fury, the puny spite of a mouse in the claws of a toying cat. I've a dim recollection of a terrible rush, then of being prostrated on the carpet; then blindfolded, amid the harsh dissonance of a horrid

yell; then roughly huddled into the street; then of hearing Pearson's voice, as if calling out in an angry tone from a deep grave at my feet, and then of being suddenly deserted.

"Memory travels through the scene as through the hazy incidents of a dream. It grasps no part of it fully. Only touches edges, or at most, gropes about broken outlines. I looked up, around, behind, before. There was no yard, nor any appearance of such a house as that from which I was sure I had just been forcibly, and even violently, thrust. I walked on, hoping to meet with Pearson. But no! I met a cab, and gave the driver my address, and after a weary ride, followed by a heavy fare, I found Gilbert anxiously waiting for me. I related all. To his and my own astonishment I wasn't either hurt, or minus my watch or purse. We went the following day to Pearson's lodgings. But he had not returned. We waited three days for his reappearance, but in vain. In a state of excruciating suspense, we were compelled to leave London for home, our thoughts running on robbery and murder, forcible detention and ruin!"

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## CHAPTER XIX.

EDWARD YATES.

ARNOLD returned, much depressed. Not less by Maud's insinuations respecting his uncle than the failure of their attempt to reclaim his cousin. That uncle shared his sorrowful regret, and mourned over his niece like one bereaved.

Well, time sped away, the cause of Temperance making progress, and the curse of drunkenness multiplying its victims. Before November it had closed the mortal career of Mrs. Ray, Rowland's mother; and seen Mr. Smirk, surgeon, retire from the practice of his "healing art," a dissipated and nearly ruined man. It had witnessed Harry's enlistment into the army, but had withheld tidings of the rank he had gained, if any, and the part in which he sojourned, if a sojourner at all, on the earth. It had been silent as the grave in regard to the fate of Pearson and Maud. Not a word had it spoken; not a hint had it given. Lightly it had touched Arnold and Felicia, working no change in their principles or affections.

The death of Mrs. Ray, although a quiet departure to rest and happiness, was keenly felt by her family. The leave-taking

was painfully pathetic, as were also her maternal anxieties and fervent prayers, having reference to wanderers fondly loved.

In death, that hour when so many mental films perish, as the grim Destroyer veils the bodily eyes, she breathed out thanks to the Great Mover of all hearts, that her sons had been turned to hate the drunkard's way, and expressed a hope that they would continue to walk in the ways of sobriety, piety, and truth. In the process of ripening for heaven, she had flung off, as does the bird its faded and ruffled plumage, a prejudice which, alas! has marred, and still mars, what would otherwise be beautiful and almost unblemished Christian characters.

Neither at Prospect House, nor elsewhere, was there one who more deeply mourned the event which had left them her vacant chair and silenced her familiar voice, than her grandson, Arnold. And yet there was one question which even during the freshness of that bereavement was constantly uppermost in his thoughts; it went with him to "the works," and haunted him in the counting-house; mingled with his musings in the sanctuary, and with his thoughts in the market; joined him in retirement, and seemed to creep out of the very page he read, and boldly confront him. It was this: how is it *really* with uncle? This question was a thorn in his mind which he could not extract; a probe which made his very heart quiver, whose anguish he could not blunt.

Much transpired calculated to sharpen his suspicions. Whispered conferences with Mrs. Hudson, and flying visits to London. Oftentimes deep dejection, and once, or twice, unusual and most unaccountable buoyance. Intense restlessness at post-time, and not unfrequently extreme misery as the result of letters bearing a certain style of address. These were so many goads to his anxious agitation; so many irritants that inflamed his growing apprehension.

In December he received a letter from his sister Julia, which promised to divert his thoughts for some time from the seemingly strange mystery that enveloped his uncle's life. It contained an urgent request for a visit from Arnold and his wife; and informed them that Yates had been a second time ill, but was slowly recovering. Arnold felt, of course, great interest in anything appertaining to his sister. Consequently, arrangements were at once commenced, and a few days before Christmas Mr. and Mrs. Haworth had started on their journey.

Edward Yates lived on a large farm, which was a good

property, that belonged to an intimate relative. After his marriage he addressed himself, with brave determination, to the cultivation of his land, the thorough reformation of his life, and the reparation of the injury done to his character and conscience, purse and constitution, by intemperance. To some extent he succeeded, but not by a long way to the extent he had supposed he could. He had deemed it a light task to renounce the cup and become a sober man. "A drinking habit was a fetter which a whim could any day break." He found, however, that on this point he had been in error. His habits proved themselves tyrants, which challenged his utmost strength of resolve and power of resistance. He sustained the conflict nobly, though not without twice yielding to the prowess of his adversaries. With the bitter tears and hot shame of a galling defeat, he renewed the struggle, and ultimately vanquished foes which, unopposed, or even feebly resisted, would soon have crushed his happiness, hopes, and life.

But those habits had wrought irreparable mischief. They had undermined his health, at least so declared his physician. Twice he had been ill; each illness being the melancholy fruit of seeds of disease sown in the sad season of dissipation. His second prostration was attended and aggravated by intense mental misery—remorse, terrible apprehension, and horror! The fear laid hold upon him like a giant vulture, that his strength was irrecoverably gone; that his days were numbered. He had supposed, as thousands, alas! of young men every day suppose, that youth may carouse with perfect impunity; that no dissoluteness can bring down the iron vigour of the youthful frame. He had laughed at the cry, "Beware!" as a timid woman's caution against an imaginary danger. His strength was firm, wherefore should he fear? What could cause his step to halt, or his foot to slip? That delusion was dissipated; dissipated by sobriety and reflection. He saw that a young man might ruin his health; might drink himself into the grave, with even the dew of youth on his budding powers. Yet, until his second illness, he had no suspicion that Edward Yates had been in imminent danger of committing such a crime. He had been safe, because he had reformed in time; because he had turned away from destruction whilst it was yet far distant. Then, however, he found out his mistake—made a terrible discovery. As the sudden dispersion of a dense mist has disclosed to the view of the traveller a yawning chasm, or mighty precipice, at



his very feet ; so his severe illness opened his eyes to the sight, as he imagined, of an open grave, and himself sliding down its crumbling side into the darkness and silence of death !

He started back in palpitating horror ! Far as he believed intemperance to have pushed him in the direction of danger, he had no suspicion, up to that time, that he had allowed it to drive him so far. For days he was wrung with anguish. Never had life appeared half so precious, nor drunkenness aught like so gigantic a curse ! How he desired—prayed—that he might be spared, for the sake of his loving wife and lovely little ones ! How hateful then seemed the ways that threatened to separate him from them ! How cruel and deceitful his drunken pleasures ; tempting him with their honey, only to madden him with their stings ! How dissonant sounded the song of the tavern, and how hollow the laugh of intoxicated mirth, in presence of those bitter regrets and heavy sighs which had been bequeathed by them ! His wine and spirits had corrupted into wormwood and gall ! His comrade-revellers disported themselves on the blasted plains of memory like fiendish spirits in league with the Prince of Darkness, alluring men by their wild dance and merriment and maniac sport, their steaming bowls and brandished bottles and sparkling glasses down into the deep woes and degradation of sin, and crime, and ruin !

Julia was for several days well-nigh prostrated by despair ; for it appeared to her that Edward's symptoms pointed to pulmonary disease. She loved him intensely, and was herself the object of a response that lacked neither warmth nor worth. They were well adapted to each other ; and happily, in all probability, would they have lived, and brightly would their prospects have bloomed, had it not been for the blighting feebleness inherited by Mr. Yates from his youthful follies. This was the sad rot at the core of Julia's hopes. Being gloomy and despondent, she pined for congenial society, and yearned for strengthening sympathy ; and knowing no society to her so congenial, nor sympathy so strengthening as those of Arnold and Felicia, she had entreated them to honour her home with their presence, and comfort them with their counsels and company.

It was evening, cold and dark, when our friends arrived at their journey's end. Of course they received a warm welcome ; they found Julia much more cheerful and hopeful than they had expected, her husband was much better, and the doctor had

declared that it was by no means a hopeless case. Arnold was impatient to see him; and as soon as his sister had so far fluttered off her blissful excitement as to be able to comprehend a question and direct a movement, she conducted him to the invalid's room.

Poor Yates! He was pitifully shaken and shattered, and manifested no little emotion on meeting with his young friend. With quivering lip and tear-filled eyes he assured that friend that he was a great deal better; that he could walk across his room, and perform other wonderful feats; which a month ago he couldn't have done for the world.

Across the mind of each there swept in vivid remembrance certain incidents and events, in which both had been actors. Mr. Yates even attempted a delicate allusion to them; but Arnold considering him too weak and excitable to sustain, without injury, any conversation on such moving subjects, evaded his questions and withdrew, promising to return after tea.

"That's right, Arnold," was Yates's welcome, when his brother reappeared. "I've thought you long; now sit down, and let's have a chat; you've no idea how I've longed to see you of late—so many things to talk about. Don't be afraid of me. The doctor says I need company; and further, that it's very desirable I should be drawn out of myself, though by what process that's to be done, and what would be the result of a successful operation, I can't imagine. Well, and how's all about Broadly and Throng? Poor Smirk! That's a smash and no mistake! How'll he get on?"

"As he can, I suppose. He's good friends, I believe."

"How foolish in his giving up practice, Arnold!"

"Well, I don't know. You see that attempt at suicide oozed out, and it of course damaged his reputation."

"Did it though?"

"Oh, yes. Poor man! Harry'd near been the death of him."

"By the bye, heard of Harry lately?" Arnold shook his head. "Had an old school-chum here the other day, who'd seen him in Portsmouth, so crestfallen, and haggard, and miserable! He thinks he'll not endure existence much longer. But what of Maud and Pearson? What's the last you've heard?"

"I've not heard a word since their mysterious disappearance."

"Not a word?"

"Not a word."

"Just look out on to the landing, Arnold; those girls of ours may be about. All right? Then reclose the door. We had Pearson here some few weeks after your strange adventure in London."

"Really?"

"Fact, sir."

"That cruel deceiver! Why hasn't he written to relieve our minds? And why have you been silent, Edward? Where are they?"

"I've been silent because he particularly requested it; because he bound me, in a way, by a promise. I suppose they're in the States. He said he would write to you as soon as they'd landed."

"Why didn't he write to us before? *So foolish*, because we might have helped them."

"Well, you see" (Mr. Yates lowered his voice), "there was a reason for his wishing to keep quiet. I may mention it to you, because it'll be as safe in your custody as in mine. He was apprehensive, that in the struggle that night he mortally wounded one of the men who so violently ejected him from that room, and trundled him, as he phrased it, into the street."

"I'm sorry for that, and wish he may have been mistaken. It's a relief, however, to hear that *he* wasn't murdered. Where did he go to? What became of Maud? Did he tell you? I see why he didn't return—or suppose I do—to his lodging."

"Maud was allowed to depart unmolested, and they met at her apartments; she was in great distress about you; feared something serious might have befallen you."

"Did she abide by her engagement, do you know?"

"No. She never returned; she was quite sick of the whole thing, and they used the utmost despatch to get away."

"Oh, Edward! I do pray that they may see into the error and sin of their way of life!"

"I believe they will, Arnold. I believe Pearson will yet be a sober man, and Maud a sober woman. They've had some hard lessons."

"Thank you for those words; they cheer me, and will much relieve uncle Rowland."

"Is uncle the same in his principles and practice, Arnold?"

Yates looked with a puzzling sort of curiosity at his brother.

"I've observed no change in him, Edward. Why do you put

such a question? Don't you consider him a stanch, consistent man?"

Yates blushed, and began playing with his mixture and spoon. At what? Did some vile suggestion warm his cheek into a glow? Arnold also became hot and uneasy. Why? Did some hated surmise torment him? Very likely, for the writer has it on unimpeachable authority, that the old inquiry came up again, fresh and disagreeable as ever,—“How is it *really* with uncle?” To this inquiry there was added another—“What can Yates know to cause that embarrassment?” He resolved to ask him if he did know aught; to ask him plainly, pointedly, emphatically.

Just then, unfortunately as Arnold thought, there was a gentle tap at the door, and in answer to a question by Mr. Yates, it was softly opened, and a child came in. Mr. and Mrs. Yates had two children; the eldest a sweet, tiny girl, with fair features and silver locks, just able to trot and prattle, and achieve such marvels as always astonish idolatrous fathers and mothers, and such as are wonderful enough—so they think—to astonish the world, if the world generally were not so dead to infantile prodigies of merit and talent. It was this fascinating idol that then came creeping in with timidity and shamefacedness, to wish her fond parent good night. That parent took her up into his trembling arms, pressed the soft face to his faded cheek, puckered the little mouth into beautiful deformity, and then kissed the ruby lips, as only fathers and mothers *can* do.

“Arnold,” he said, squeezing the child in a tight hug, “what have been to me during this illness my hardest work and thought? I’ll tell you: bidding this child good night, and thinking that in a little while it might be a long farewell!” Beneath both questions, answer and embrace, Arnold perceived an embarrassment which Yates vainly attempted to cover.

“Oh, sir,” the latter went on, “it’s the hardest sort of thing I know, to feel these little ones creeping around you, clinging to you, frail fibres of plants twining about the parent tree; and to fear that that tree is being cut down, and that they may be torn and mangled in its fall, their little blooming hopes, like blossoms, crushed for ever, is something agonizing! As this child has come in here, night after night, to prattle and wish me better, giving me her tiny hand, and turning up her little face for a kiss, and as I’ve imagined at the same time that I’ve

heard the grim woodman's axe in my obstinate cough, and felt the quiver of his merciless strokes in my shooting pains and shivers, I've been afraid sometimes that my heart would burst with its swelling anguish. What wouldn't I give at those times for a shred of that strength so recklessly burnt up by spirituous liquors! For the return of that health, with its firm pulse and bounding step, so madly murdered by the poisonous cup! For those energies of activity, and toil, and endurance, the gift of a merciful Providence, with which I sported, as a maniac might with the choicest treasures! But why repine? They're gone—lost! it may be for ever! And who's to blame but myself? My own hand thrust them from me! My own folly flung them away! Good night, dear, God bless you! Poor innocent child!" he continued, as if thinking aloud, "drinking has thrown a dark shadow across thy path. Hard, it seems to me, that thou shouldst be in peril of bereavement, and all on account of another's sin and folly!"

Julia and Felicia here appeared, and put an end to the *tête-à-tête* of Arnold and Edward. To the former it was anything but a welcome interruption. He conjectured that Yates possessed a key that might admit him to the meaning of much which was gallingly, even distressingly, perplexing. That key he was impatient to obtain, that he might relieve his suspense, which had been put to a painful strain. He pencilled a note and slipped it into Edward's hand when bidding him good-night. The note asked for the opportunity of a little conversation as soon as convenient respecting Mr. Ray.

"Brother," Arnold said earnestly, when they were alone on the morrow, "when I asked you yesterday if you didn't consider uncle Rowland a stanch, consistent man, you coloured deeply, seemed embarrassed, and made no reply. Now I particularly request that you will explain to me the meaning of that embarrassment. As you will have gathered from my note, it has troubled, it has even tormented me. I'm becoming very unhappy respecting uncle. He behaves to me like a father and a Christian; but there is much about his conduct that is very queer. Much that I can't understand."

"And, to be frank, Arnold, there is much about what I hear which I cannot explain."

"Well, what do you hear? Out with it."

"But do we understand that we are speaking in strict confidence?"

"Of course. I hope you don't suppose that I mean to betray you."

"I don't. Nor do I wish to make an enemy of uncle Rowland."

"What do you know? What have you seen?"

"Seen? I've seen nothing, I've merely heard."

"Heard. Well, what have you heard? But first, from whom have you heard?"

"From Pearson."

"Pearson! And what's he got to say?"

"This: that he's met uncle, two or three times, in a place of very questionable repute in London."

"Indeed; and did uncle know Pearson?"

"He believes not."

"Well, what has he seen? What did uncle do? What appeared to be his business? Keep back nothing."

"I presume he didn't do anything in particular. Pearson says he peeped and peered about with cunning caution, as though prosecuting some search that required very delicate tact. On one occasion, and Harry was with him that time, they saw him join a party of gentlemen, converse closely with them, and then hurriedly withdraw."

"Have they ever seen him drink, Edward? This is what I wish to know."

"Never, Arnold. And of that fact Pearson made particular mention."

"Has he seemed under the influence of liquor?"

"No."

"Thank God! He'll come out of this cloud yet; I'm somehow confident he will, wholly unblemished by a single stain. I wonder Pearson didn't name those meetings to me."

"He longed to do so, but feared it might reach uncle's ears and offend him. I believe he yet means to return, and by steadiness and uprightness reinstate himself in the favour and affections of all his friends and relatives."

"I pray he may. I only wish I could help him. Anything more? Don't reserve aught."

"I've nothing more to say, only this: that I hope you will not drag my name into this business. My family may yet need both your and uncle's friendship."

"Of course I shall not. Don't be apprehensive. Why should I? Indeed I'm not sure that I shall name it to uncle

at all. I may wait for events to work out explanations. In one instance I've done so, and have been rewarded."

The subject was then dropped. During that visit it was often alluded to by the young men when alone; but in their most earnest discussion of it they failed to relieve, by so much as a spark of light, the dense darkness that shrouded it, to frame aught like a satisfactory hypothetical explanation of Mr. Ray's mysterious conduct.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### EXPLANATIONS.

ONE evening, a few days after Mr. and Mrs. Haworth's return to Prospect House, Arnold was alone in his room, seated at a table on which were spread sundry papers and books. He was not writing; he was not reading. One hand held a pen, and on the palm of the other his bleached forehead rested, as if heavy with anxious, weighty thoughts. He was so absorbed in his musings that his senses failed to acquaint him with the fact that a second person was in the room, until a soft hand was placed on his shoulder, and the name 'Arnold' was whispered into his ear.

"Felicia! How you startled me!"

"Startled you! Not so much as you startled me, I hope. Whatever are you thinking of? The subject must have wonderful charms. Didn't you hear me speak?"

"Certainly not."

"Do I intrude?"

"Oh, dear no. Sit down."

Felicia drew a chair close to her husband's, took away the prop from the apparently heavy forehead, gathered it up into her own hands, and said, looking earnestly into Arnold's face,—

"Well, my dear, and what is it? I perceived at tea there was something wrong. You don't keep aught from your wife, do you?"

"What an eye you've got, Felicia! You can detect the least speck of care. Has uncle returned?"

"I believe not. Then there is care. Now what is it?"

"What'll be the penalty if I don't tell you, Filly?"

"Penalty! Maybe I shall bounce out of the room, and sulk for the long period of seven, or seventeen minutes. There now! *Have a care!*"

"I think so. How dreadful! Well, have you noted any change in uncle to-day?"

"Yes: that he was unusually cheerful this morning. But that cannot be a grief to you."

"How know you that, my dear?"

"Oh, I don't know it. I only suppose it. But why should it?"

"Ay, why should it? I told you he accompanied me to the mill this morning. Now guess what he then told me."

"Guess! How can I?"

"Then think of it, as I've been doing. He told me this, that in all likelihood he should be leaving us shortly. For what length of time he couldn't say. I'm to hear all about it as soon as he returns."

"Leaving us shortly! Whither is he going?"

"Can't imagine."

"Oh," Felicia rejoined reflectively, "perhaps he's for the States, to seek up his brother and Pearson and Maud."

"I wish that may prove to be his object in leaving us; I doubt it though."

"It may be. Why shouldn't it be?"

"Look at that. I found it in this book this evening. He's been reading it to-day, and has dropped it in as a mark."

It was a slip from a letter, on which were written, in a familiar hand, two or three sentences, and a fragment of a sentence. The purport of the sentences was, that something might be done — *ought* to be done; that the time had fully come, and that hesitation and postponement would be foolish. The handwriting was Mrs. Hudson's.

"I wish we could see the letter from which this is torn, Arnold."

"This shows what the drift would be, pretty clearly."

"Pity but you knew the date."

"Date? Not five days back. See, this is the cover." From another part of the book he drew an envelope, bearing Mr. Ray's address, in the same hand, and carrying the London post-mark. "It came inside this, without a doubt."

"But where is Martha?"

"In London. So uncle informed me yesterday."

"What *can* she be doing there? How often she goes up!"

"Doing there! Nay, I'm fairly puzzled. Those frequent trips to London baffle me altogether."



They gazed fixedly and in silence at each other. They hated the surmise dilating before their eyes into an ugly probability; fastening itself upon them with all the vigour and vividness of a conviction.

"It's what I've feared," Arnold observed, with a heavy sigh.

"Well, uncle should know best, my dear. He's old enough. But I'll tell you this, he'll receive a violent rating from his relatives if he should take such a step."

"Not from you, I hope, Felicia."

"Me? Oh, dear no!"

"Nor from me, certainly. Martha is a very decent woman: pious, clever, and, above all, sober. Nevertheless, I'd not expected it. But here he comes. Leave us alone, dear; when he's had tea, I'll give——"

"Halloa! you're here, Felicia. Do I intrude? Don't run away. Nothing serious, that you're in such solemn conference, is there?"

"You've not had tea, uncle?"

"There now! that proves you don't know everything, much as that youth thinks you know. I've had tea, thank you."

"But if you don't require tea, uncle, my work requires me. So to it I'll go."

"Arnold, my boy," Mr. Ray said, as he threw himself on to a couch, "if you were to—

'Trace the globe around,  
And search from Britain to Japan,'

you wouldn't find another wife like you: so take care of her, my lad, and prize her. You know a fool may give a wise man counsel. You were made for each other, and were not made in vain. Are you busy? You remember, I hope, what passed between us this morning?"

"I'm ready, uncle. At your service." He turned away from his books and papers:

"How prompt you are! I'll come to the point, or one point, at once. I hinted that I might leave you for a while. I trust I may rely on your remaining here?"

"If you wish it, uncle."

"Wish it! Haven't I sought twenty times to assure you that such is my very particular wish? I desire that whatever becomes of me, whatever freak, or folly, I commit, you will abide by Prospect House. Henceforth regard it as your home."

"Whither do you go, uncle?"

"I scarcely know yet. I may travel for a few years, if spared."

"To America?"

"N—no, hardly so far, I think. If I do, I suppose you wish to be remembered to our kindred over there?"

"I should like to hear something good of them."

"Arnold, as soon as they become habitually sober you may receive good tidings of or from them. Not—never till then. A word about Yates and Julia: I fear he will yet have to succumb to the premature emaciation induced by early dissipation. If so, and whether or no, befriend and help them, and place it to my account. Poor Yates! There are some punishments from which repentance will not save a man; and such are some of the penalties of drunkenness."

Mr. Ray paused, and Arnold reflected. The question again came up, "How is it *really* with uncle?" This time a wrangling troop of inquiries and rejoinders followed, such as—"Is he deceiving me? It cannot be. Why not though? He's imperfect, and certainly not above temptation. I can conceive of evil inducements sufficiently strong to move and snare him; of corrupting influences bad enough to spoil *his* integrity. Shall I ask the meaning of his strange conduct? Such a question might offend. Yes, but it might relieve my suspense, and lead in the end to good. I'll try and work my way to the point."

"Does your attachment to Temperance abate at all, uncle?"

"Thank you, Arnold—I mean for speaking. I'd begun to be puzzled by your brooding silence. My attachment to Temperance doesn't decrease at all, nor does my sense of its importance weaken. But why the inquiry? I don't perceive any connection between it and my last observation." With a slight touch of confusion Arnold replied,—

"I fear there's a great deal of secret drinking, uncle. My adventure in London impresses me with the suspicion. Have your observations led to such a way of thinking?"

"My observations led to such a way of thinking! That secret drinking is practised on a most gigantic scale isn't a surmise, or supposition with me at all. It's a full-blown conviction. Remembering what I've seen and know, it cannot be otherwise!"

"You've beheld different phases of life?"

"Different phases! Ay, such as I pray you may never behold,

Arnold! I could fill you with horror by the mere mention of the cruelties I've seen drink inflict! With disgust of your kind and class, by a bare allusion to the beastliness I've known it cause respectable people to hanker for and wallow in! But I don't like to dwell upon them."

"Didn't you like to behold them, uncle? Were you compelled to do so? Or was it choice?"

"Choice, in a way, before I became a sober man. Necessity, in a way, afterwards." Arnold's heart leaped as the next question passed his lips.

"Have you looked on those phases of life *since* your reformation?"

"Arnold, I'm sorry—though not exactly ashamed—to say that I have. I've been a spectator of them."

"Then Pearson was not mistaken," Arnold reflected. There was a tap at the door. Mr. Ray was wanted. As he passed out he said—perhaps he whispered the words, perhaps he placed his hands on the young man's shoulders by way of emphasizing his observation,—

"A spectator of them; *not* an actor."

With a light step he glided out, and left his nephew to meditate on his many-hued character and life. In a few minutes Felicia appeared, and disturbed her husband's meditations, but could not gnaw by so much as a fibre the net of perplexity in which he was meshed. Rather she tangled it yet more; for she raised his astonishment and thickened his mental confusion by informing him that the visitor who had just arrived was Mrs. Hudson; that they had closeted themselves at once; that, passing the door, she had heard them laughing heartily; that she was sure they were wrong respecting the widow; and that they must get up a different solution from the bottom of the mystery before they could understand it.

For four or five days they angled right zealously, but with no success. They only brought up black sediment, that rendered the waters all the more dark and muddy.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ray led a wholly altered life. There was a ring in his voice, a briskness in his manner, a purpose about his going out and coming in, rising up and sitting down, a sort of relish for, and interest in, men and things, events and movements, that told of a great change. It was like a resurrection from a state of death. It was a marvellous quickening—a moral reviviscence. A cloud, a firmament of leaden cloud, had broken,

and like a sun he shone out clear, cheerful, genial, as some then living had known him do in his former life.

With the transformation his friends were pleased. None more so than Arnold; and yet none were more embarrassed by it. He sought—dived, in a way—for a solution, which he was sure must exist somewhere. This bewilderment was heightened by the excited, fussy manner of Mrs. Hudson on two occasions, and yet more by a whispered intimation in the counting-house that Mr. Rowland and a strange lady had been seen, near the still hour of midnight, to step from a conveyance at Mr. James Ray's door, and pass with a queer ghostly hush into the house.

Was it Maud? he asked himself. It might be aunt Thompson, he reflected, returning from her wanderings, dispirited, covered with shame, repentant and sad. He spoke to Felicia on the subject; *her* manner had suddenly changed, a ringing laugh was her tantalizing reply. She had thrown off her gravity; was even vivacious. What did it mean? What *could* it mean? Were they all conspiring to torment him? In league to weave enigmas?

Through two days of racking *unrest* he had dragged, when Mr. Ray entered his room and thus spoke:—

"Arnold, I'm an odd, and *may be*, cruel uncle; but may you never have a less faithful friend than I hope to prove. Come to brother James's this evening to tea at six. But before coming—if practicable, the last thing before coming—read this paper," placing one before him. "Read it carefully; and, when finished, come direct to your uncle's, and ask for me. Do as I request, and I promise your deliverance from what I believe now pain and torment you—dark and suspicious thoughts." He withdrew.

In the evening Arnold, somewhat agitated, opened the paper, or papers, and read—all alone, of course—the *substance* of the following:—

"Many years ago there lived in these parts a young man, not without abilities of a certain order, nor yet wholly destitute of the spirit of enterprise. Country life being too dull for his love of excitement, he resolved to go to London to make a fortune, and take his fill of pleasure. Aided by his father's friends and connections, he was able soon to establish a thriving business, and to realize handsome profits. He then sought to give himself unto wine, 'and to lay hold on folly, till he might see what was good for the sons of men, which they should

do under the heaven all the days of their life ;' but he found out that 'all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.'

"He then resolved to seek for happiness in another way of life. He wooed and married a beautiful woman, one to whom he could give, and did give, his heart, and from whom he received the warm treasure of an ardent and undivided affection. In peace and harmony they lived for many blissful months ; he tried to shake off the yoke of former habits, and become an exemplary husband and friend.

"There was born unto him a lovely son, in whose form he beheld a stronger tie to life, and in whose cry he heard a louder call to work and duty and sobriety than he had ever known before. But, alas ! he was the victim of feeble resolves, and wicked, wily associates. The glass, like a coiling serpent, wound daily its folds of power around him, until he found himself in a crushing bondage. And the hatefulness of his thralldom was one day intensified by the unexpected discovery that his wife, once so fair and beautiful, so innocent and pure, had allowed herself to be dragged into the same slavery of shame, and misery, and death ! Oh ! inexpressibly loathsome was existence to that young man, when he awoke to a knowledge of the depth to which he and his once lovely wife had fallen ! For he was not without his yearnings after a better way of life ; nor without a sense of honour ; nor even ardent wishes to be good and great.

"But worse than loathsome did existence become ! All but absolutely intolerable, from its weight of guilt, and shame, and remorse ! It received the burden of a calamity—a wrong—a crime. He and his wife had been entertaining a convivial party, and had retired for the few remaining hours of the night, when the servants raised a cry—no false alarm—of fire. His wife snatched up their child, and hastened wildly from the room. She reached the landing, but was unequal to a safe descent. Mother and child rolled down the long staircase, and lay a helpless heap at the bottom. She was intoxicated, and the boy they feared was killed ; he recovered strength, but up to the present is, I believe, without the faculty of speech, and has not yet regained the sense of hearing. The cause of fire, fright, and fall was—Drink !

"This melancholy occurrence blighted, as may be supposed, their small remnant of domestic joy, and tainted, as with a

canker of bitterness, their waking hours and troubled dreams. They sought, by the aid of spirituous liquors, so to stultify their understandings, that they wouldn't be able to take in its huge and terrible proportions of guilt! So to blind the eye of Memory, that it wouldn't be able to see it! and so to sear their consciences, that they should not be galled by the sense of wrong! they hoped by the false buoyancy born of intoxication to rise above it; by the shorn strength of staggering drunkenness to stand against it. But their devices were so many attempts to fly from beneath the frowning face of Heaven. Wretchedness thickened around, depression grew upon them.

"All things seemed against them; for even Time, which has received the praise of poets as a healer of bleeding hearts, wrung gall and wormwood into their cup from the sin and folly of others. The father, brothers, and sister of this young wife, who for years had addicted themselves to drinking, became the fallen miserable victims of their debasing habits. For drink, they sacrificed a home once amply furnished with comforts, and a business once amply competent to yield them riches. Friends whom it was an honour to own, and positions that royalty need not have been ashamed to occupy! For drink, they dragged their once fair name through the filthiest mire, and bedaubed their hands with deeds from which at one time they would have shrunk with deepest abhorrence! For drink, they became prowlers through dark haunts, and loiterers in dens of infamy, which once heard, or read of, would have been heard and read of with shuddering horror! They got down! down! well-nigh as far down the depths of wretchedness and degradation as it was possible to sink; and by long and anxious watching in thought of that grey-haired debaucher, and those poor wandering ones, in their woe and vice, their folly and danger, the reason of that wife and daughter and sister was scared in the end from its throne by the terrible picture, and she became frantically and almost unmanageably mad!

"This calamity seemed to be the breaking of her husband's last tie to life. A giant billow, that snapped his feeble moorings to the shore of Time, and threatened in its ebb to take him far out on some boundless ocean. He attempted to fight against his misery; to carry his red-hot cross of shame and anguish. But in vain! The mania showed no symptom of abatement; his remedies touched no vital part of the malady. He was advised, and reluctantly compelled, to place her in a private

institution for the insane, and his boy in an establishment for the dumb. Impatiently he waited for improvement, but his hopes were cruelly cut off.

"Dispirited and perplexed, without a heart and without an aim, he wandered through the streets, or sought for diversion of thought in the vile resorts of the metropolis. One day his attention was drawn to a tract on the subject of drunkenness; drawn by what he considered the extravagance of its title. It ascribed much of the wretchedness and misery in the world to our drinking customs. That tract he resolved to study. He did study it, and not in vain; it changed his views; even inspired him with resolves; he determined to lead an altered life. Not in London, but amid the green fields, the loved and lovely scenes of his youthful days. With what shameful dilatoriness he carried out that resolution is well known. And how he lived is known in part, at least, *in part*; for *all* that he endured during those years, all of regret and remorse, of anxiety and suspense, no one fully knows but the Searcher of all hearts. Nor yet the business that occupied largely his thoughts, and filled what seemed to be his unengaged hands.

"In the course of years a hope was awakened that the affliction of his wife might prove to be curable. In regard to this the physician expressed himself as sanguine, provided her thoughts could be turned away from the distracting wrong of the past, and her family recovered from their life of dissipation and ruin. Over the sad career of her father and sister she brooded with dejection, and sorrow, and shame; and not less over her own intemperance, and the melancholy deprivations of her son. Eager, of course, to effect her recovery, her husband spared no pains to accomplish whatsoever might seem to be favourable thereto. He tracked father and sister through haunts, the remembrance of which is agony to him still; and came upon them in conditions of want and suffering that might seem a retribution stern enough for a whole life of vice.

"But to reclaim them was next to an impossible task. Habit held them with the grasp of iron. Sober, they declared they could not live! When not under the influence of the glass, reflection stung them—visions terrified them! The past appeared a dark wilderness, haunted by the fiendish ghosts of crime, from which they fled; the future, a prospect red with the lurid fires of wrath, from which they shrunk. They had no resting-place, no refuge, but in the stupor of intoxication.

“But the career of vice, at the longest, is short. And so it proved in the case of that unhappy sister. Death smote her, when she ought to have been in the bloom of life. Smote her, covered with shame and crime, surrounded by want and neglect. Terminated her mournful course in a lonely garret, where was no friendly hand to minister aid, nor ambassador for Christ to point to His atoning death. The sad intelligence of this sad event, conveyed, of course, in a softened form, created no shock, extorted no frantic wail of grief. It was received as a merciful visitation of a merciful God; nor was there a commenting word of complaint. The father died also—died bound hand and foot with his fettering vices, yet calling, in wandering moods, on his Creator for forbearance and forgiveness.

“Their lives of misery over, her own became more peaceful; and where we had before beheld the blank of darkness and despair, we were favoured with lucid intervals of reason and right feeling. Care, if possible, was redoubled, and assiduity in nursing made more assiduous still. A friend of the anxious, trembling husband's was now frequently with her, to acquaint her with that husband's altered way of life, his wishes, and his strong desire to make her happy. Reason, by God's blessing, has again begun to reign; the love of former years has revived in all its warmth and force; she has lost, and has resolved not again to acquire, her taste for spirituous liquors; and now waits for the happiness of seeing her relatives and friends, before starting on a tour in search of the establishment of health, and a sober, salutary diversion of thought.

“Oh! what cause has that husband to hate and denounce our drinking system! What a curse is Intemperance! Roll all other curses into one, and they reach not the gigantic proportions of this curse! Pile evil upon evil, in thought, until you have built all the evil with which we are acquainted into one mountain, and this will tower above them all! It has slain larger armies than war! Created more want than famine! Destroyed more property than fire or flood! Blighted more life than pestilence, and ruined more souls than the church has instrumentally saved! And now! now it is hard at work in our midst! At work—sapping the foundations of health, sealing the springs of domestic comfort, closing avenues to distinction and honour, calling out train after train of want and misery, striking with paralysis noble intellects, corrupting moral affections, and thronging our way with frantic wives and home-



less orphans, mournful, pitiable harvest of drunkenness. More ! isn't it the fountain-head of crime ? Doesn't it fill our prisons ? Sharpen the murderer's knife ? Furnish most of the business of the hangman's calling ? Arnold ! let there be no relaxation of effort to stay this giant curse ! Let us 'be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in this work of the Lord, forasmuch as our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.' "

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CONCLUSION.

VERY few words will suffice to bring our narrative to a close. Of course Arnold's wonder was raised, his stinging suspicions allayed, and his heart gladdened by an introduction that evening to his aunt Ray at uncle James's. Mr. and Mrs. Rowland went abroad, and found much quiet enjoyment. Thompson Ray died a miserable drunkard in one of the states of America. Of Maud and Pearson the writer knows nothing. Poor Smirk lived for years in comparative neglect, and died nursing very vivid impressions of the evils of intemperance. Harry came to his end in India, after gaining a transient glory in some fight, or skirmish. Yates recovered, but never was strong. Mrs. Hudson left Broadly to reside near to London. Mr. Ray made her comfortable in circumstances ; and her own conscience, conduct, and possession of God's favour rendered her happy in mind. Arnold and Noble, James and Gilbert, went on in what seemed to each the path of duty : boldly, firmly, openly maintaining, that a greater curse to the hopes, happiness, and souls of men, has not yet blown its pestilent breath on the world, than the gigantic curse of—**DRUNKENNESS !**

THE END.

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